



# WATERY SAUCES OLDIES and BOLDIES

Newsletter No 93

December 2020

NEWSLETTER OF THE WATER RESOURCES RETIREES ASSOCIATION

## The Delayed AGM ...

Because of the COVID-19 restrictions it became necessary for the AGM, normally scheduled for April, to be postponed ... and postponed. Eventually the restrictions were eased somewhat which would allow COTAH to cater for our usual Christmas luncheon. The Committee therefore devised a cunning plan to hold the AGM on the same day in the same venue. This should assure good attendance as, tempted by a subsidized lunch, members would flock to the AGM. Alas, this proved not to be the case and only a dozen members attended the meeting.

President Peter Gilbey presented his annual report on a constrained programme. It and Garry Corbett's Treasurer's report can be found on our website.

Elections were held. Daryl Brigden was elected President which meant that Mike Merrin stood down as Past President and Peter Gilbey took over that office. Gary Corbett was reelected Treasurer and Bruce Pearce and Chris Robson were elected to the Committee. A brief note on new member Chris's career can be found on page 4. There was, however, no nomination for either Secretary or Vice President. This is very serious as the Association simply cannot function without a Secretary. A number of members have been approached and it appears we may find a taker. Here's hoping.

The new committee will be in place until next April when it is expected that the next AGM will be held at the "normal" time when the world itself has returned to the "new normal".

## Christmas Luncheon

By contrast, the luncheon was quite well attended by around 30 members and guests, though the numbers were probably constrained because of COVID.

The meal was excellent, as usual: Terry Loos's trivia were challenging, as usual. James Purtill, as Director-General of DNRME had hoped to attend, but he was called away to engage in discussions regarding the Ministerial reorganisation that followed the recent State election, so the department was not represented (see note on page 2 regarding rearrangements).

Sunwater has appointed a new CEO, Glenn Stockton (see page 4), who had hoped to attend but had been called away at the last minute. Instead Sunwater was again very ably represented by Colin Bendell, Executive General Manager Operations, who delivered an interesting "state of the nation" address. A summary of this can be found on page 2.

*Who would have predicted what 2020 would bring? Talk about an Annus horribilis! Australia has fared so much better than many other nations, no doubt because of the advantage of being an island. But being cut off from the rest of the world has its serious downside as well.*

*Queensland has fared better than other states. And I can report that I have heard of no COVID related deaths or serious infections among our members and colleagues though there must have been serious impacts.*

*We all fervently hope that the world will turn a corner and 2021 will revert to a "new normal". So we wish everyone a Happy Christmas and an especially good New Year.*

*Until next time, au reservoir.*

**Ian Pullar, Editor**



## Bethlehem Inn

Est 13 BC



"This guy came along with his pregnant wife on a donkey and asked for a room. As if I'd have a vacancy during the Christmas holidays!"

*I have been supplied with some wonderful genuine Newspaper headlines together with editorial comments. I have appended these at the bottoms of pages. One does wonder about whether editors actually read what has been written.*

## Another Watery Reorganisation

As noted on page 1, following the State election, there has been a reorganisation of departments. DNRME has been dismembered.

All of DNRME's water functions are transferring to the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water, under Minister Glenn Butcher and Director-General Frankie Carroll. These include water planning, OGIA, dam safety, supply planning and oversight of SunWater/SeqWater and other water providers. Linda Dobe will be Deputy Director-General Water. The Regional Development and Manufacturing component has a staff of around 40 while the water group has around 500.

James Purtill is going to be the Director-General of the Department of Energy and Public Works.

Lyall Hinrichsen, (our informant on these arrangements), will be staying in the Resources Department as Executive Director, Land Policy.

## Address by Colin Bendell

*Notes by Terry Loos*

Sunwater was established on 1 October 2000. On average it delivers more than 1300 GL/a but in the 2019-20 financial year, it delivered 1558 GL, mainly due to the release of (unallocated) water to lower the level of Paradise Dam for safety reasons.

Sunwater owns \$13.7 billion in assets and can store 6715 GL in its dams, weirs and barrages. It has 400+ staff across 34 locations over half of whom live and work in regional Queensland. There are more staff employed at present than in previous years because of the Paradise and the Rookwood Weir projects.

Sunwater delivers 40 per cent of all commercially-used water in the state, servicing more than 5000 customers across agriculture, industrial and urban sectors.

There is increased demand in the Bowen basin which could require additional pipeline capacity. This could include duplication of the southern spur of the Eungella Pipeline. Duplication of the pipeline from the Burdekin to Moranbah may also be an option.

The Queensland Government has made election commitments to lower the cost of general agriculture water by 15% and water for horticulture by 50%. Final arrangements on how this will be passed on to customers will be determined in liaison with Government.

The Dam Improvement Programs (DIP) in 2019-20 included (at a cost of \$49.784M): an upgrade of Fairbairn Dam; finalising repair works at Beardmore Dam in late-2019; the start of preparatory works at Burdekin Falls Dam; and essential work to lower the spillway at Paradise Dam (now complete).

In 2019-20, significant progress was made to enhance bulk water supply for irrigation, commercial, industrial and urban purposes. This included:

- increasing operating and distribution efficiency and reducing water loss across the Mareeba-Dimbulah Water Supply Scheme.
- a proposal to raise Burdekin Falls Dam.
- continuation of the Rookwood Weir project.

Operational changes were implemented to manage Covid-19. Community consultation went digital.

## The DIP in more detail

(i) The \$170M Fairbairn Dam Improvement Project commenced in 2016 after routine inspections detected inefficiencies in the spillway drainage system. Stages 1 and 2 involved updates to part of the spillway. Stage 3 involved foundation treatments and strengthening (completed in Dec 2019). The dam storage volume hit a record low of 8.6% on 18 Nov 2020.

(ii) Burdekin Falls Dam Improvement and Dam Raising Projects will bring this infrastructure in line with current standards and increase resilience to extreme weather. Sunwater is working on detailed business cases for raising the dam by 2m or 6m.

(iii) Mareeba-Dimbulah scheme supports more than 1000 irrigation, industrial and urban customers with a total of 204,424 ML in water entitlements and \$28 million is being invested to upgrade infrastructure (replacing a channel with pipe) to improve operations and reduce water loss by up to 8,306 ML/a. Completion is expected by the end of 2021. Water in the Mareeba scheme may sell in the range of \$2500 to \$4000/ML – as determined by the market.

(iv) Fred Haigh Dam Flood Damage Repairs will remediate scour damage caused by the energy impact of flood water on the natural spillway channel.

(v) Rookwood Weir Project comprises weir construction and enabling works to upgrade existing support infrastructure. Construction is expected to take up to three years commencing in 2023 (subject to approvals and weather).

(vi) Paradise Dam Essential Works and Improvement project. The 2013 record flooding caused significant damage and essential work will increase stability and downstream community safety. A series of technical studies informed the decision to lower Paradise Dam's spillway. This work will: increase the dam's resilience to extreme weather events; bring it in line with modern engineering design standards and national dam safety guidelines. The reasons for undertaking this work appears not to be fully understood in the community and a clearer explanatory program appears desirable.

*Many thanks to Colin, and to Terry - Ed.*

## Police Begin Campaign to Run Down Jaywalkers

*Now that's taking things a bit far!*

## New Committee Member Chris Robson

Chris' working life commenced as a bonded graduate engineer for IWSC in 1974 and continued in various Water and Natural Resources activities until the end of 2012. As a young engineer he worked mainly on the planning, design, and operation of irrigation and water supply schemes in many parts of the State including Mareeba, Bundaberg, St George, Maryborough, and the Burdekin. He then spent some eight years as a District and then Regional Manager before taking on policy lead roles for water planning, allocation, and catchment management in the years of water reform in the 1990s.

In his senior roles he led the development, negotiation and implementation of numerous significant public policy, legislation, science and operational reforms, the resolution of many legal and litigation matters, and was the source of advice and briefings to CEOs, Ministers, and stakeholder groups. His State-wide role, initiated the first catchment-based water allocation plans and also included Queensland's involvement and obligations in the Murray Darling Basin Commission and other interstate water resources such as the Lake Eyre Basin and the Great Artesian Basin. He then spent four years responsible for the department's natural resource sciences 400 staff providing a range of scientific services and products from hydrology,

hydrography, aquatic ecology, entomology, soil science, soil fertility and water balance, chemistry, remote sensing, climatology, geology and geophysics.

For a further six years he was responsible for policy and management of the State's land management functions, with a workforce of some 900 staff and an annual expenditure budget of some \$140 million. The functions included State Valuation Services, Queensland Titles Registration, Spatial Information, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Services, State Land Asset Management, Property and Conservation Land Tenure Services, Land Planning, and Forest Products.

Following his departure from the public service, he took on a senior role for QUT, in the strategic assessment, planning and development of the University's physical estate. Since 2013, Chris has led the preparation of a master plan for QUT's whole Estate feasibility and business case studies for several major building developments, and reviewed the management and performance of QUT's network of distributed sites. He learnt a lot about the functioning and challenges of a large university, working directly with teaching and research academic staff and professional staff. He engaged with senior staff in a number of Queensland Government agencies relating to heritage, state land administration, project assessment, transport, and statutory planning matters.

Chris plans to retire from his QUT role at the end of December this year.

## Marking a Milestone, 100 Years On

The centenary of an important milestone will occur in 2022 and demands appropriate commemoration. On 18 October some ninety-eight years ago, the *Irrigation Act of 1922* was passed. This was a significant milestone for the water industry in Queensland. Amongst other things, the Act modified previous organisational arrangements, catered for the appointment of the state's first Irrigation Commissioner, and led directly to the construction and operation of state-owned irrigation schemes – the Dawson Valley Scheme being the first. The development and implementation of projects such as this often resulted in a community of interest with lasting friendships between staff and workers' families.

This 'community' grew over the following 100 years and continued through the many iterations of organisations within government and is still out there – in a social sense partly represented within the ranks of the WRRRA. There are also a great number from this community who have been unable to keep in touch.

With 'local management' of schemes now being yet another part of the ever-changing 'water' landscape, this community continues to grow but in a somewhat different direction at arms length from government. How fitting that the Dawson Valley Scheme – the state's first irrigation scheme – is currently transitioning to a 'local management' water utility company called Theodore Water Pty Ltd; the first of several going down that road.

For those who have continued to work in the many successors of an organisation (which in 1922 went by the name Irrigation and Water Supply Department) the WRRRA Committee consider it may be a good time for members to catch up with the water resources community and any extended family who may not be members of the WRRRA.

In organising any functions to celebrate this event, we would aim to involve as many past and present members of staff as possible from all of the departments that have been involved in the Queensland water resources industry since 1922; from all regions throughout the State and possibly existing staff of the various departments and corporations currently involved in water resources investigation, assessment, management, design, construction and operation.

The Committee sees this milestone as an opportunity to promote the WRRRA as a statewide organisation giving it the opportunity of renewing contact with many of our past work colleagues.

The Committee hopes that regional communities, as well as those centred around 'head office' will join in celebrations.

Members and others in our 'community' are invited to forward any comments and suggestions they may have on possible events to celebrate this significant milestone to Bruce Pearce, a member of the Committee, who can be contacted at [brucepearce@bigpond.com](mailto:brucepearce@bigpond.com).

## Enfield (London) Couple Slain; Police Suspect Homicide

*They may be on to something!*



## 2020 WRRRA Annual Golf Day

This year's WRRRA Annual golf day at the Keppera Golf and Country Club was held on Friday 7 August.

The field this year comprised 13 members and friends who competed for prizes under a 9 hole stableford format.

This year's champion was Tony Robbins who won convincingly with an incredible score of 26 Stableford points, followed by Ken Watson with an impressive 23 points and Trevor Sleep the next best with 18 points.

Tony's round was truly incredible for someone with such a high handicap recording birdies on two of the par threes and three points or more on another four holes after wiping the first hole. Ken's scorecard was also pretty impressive with seven three pointers of his own before wiping the last.

The field was still two up on last year even with the pandemic. Mike Merrin, Greg Claydon and Doug Flanders had to pull out because of prior commitments, but new faces included Jinaraj Rajakaruna, Warren Shallcross, Col Clayton and my guest Warren Sparks from Pacific Harbour.

As per previous years, many thanks to Geoff Eades for helping to arrange a great day and to the Club for putting on a great day's golf and excellent lunch under the Covid safe requirements.

For those interested in a bit of relaxed fellowship in the great outdoors we look forward to seeing you next year.

**President Pete.**



Back row: Peter Allen, Geoff Eades, Warren Shallcross, Warren Sparks (guest) Jinaraj Rajakaruna, Terry Loos

Front row: Peter Gilbey, Trevor Sleep, Graham Young, Col Clayton (guest)

Absent : Ken Watson, Tony Robbins, Larry Mujaj.

## New CEO for SunWater

The SunWater Board has appointed accomplished infrastructure executive Glenn Stockton AM as Chief Executive Officer.

Mr Stockton brings more than 35 years of leadership experience to the company charged with the responsibility for providing critical water resources to communities and industry across the state.

Before joining Sunwater, he held senior positions such as General Manager Operations at Pacific Partnerships, and Director and Board Chairman of the Pulse Partnerships Consortium.

Mr Stockton played a key role on Brisbane's Cross River Rail project and was Director and Chief Executive Officer for the delivery and operation of the recently commissioned ACT Light Rail project.

He also served as a Colonel in the Royal Australian Engineers as part of a 24-year career with the Australian Army.

He has graciously agreed to be co-patron of WRRRA. Unfortunately, as he could not join us at the AGM, there was no opportunity for us to get to know him.

## New Members

WRRRA welcomes new members Greg Munck, Gary Luck and Jinaraj Rajakaruna.



**Thomas Gainsborough**

1727-1788

**Woman in Blue**

*When my lover said "Let  
down your hair,"  
That was something that I  
didn't dare  
For last time I tried it,  
There was no way to hide it –  
A sparrow flew up in the air.*

## A Significant Birthday

It may be of interest to old Commission hands who worked with Geoff Ward that my mother Joan turned 100 on Saturday, 7 November.

She still lives at home with my younger sister and apart from some hearing loss and reduced mobility is still in pretty good shape. **Ken Ward**

## Red Tape Holds Up New Bridges

*You mean there's something stronger than duct tape?*

## Vale – Alan Vizer 22.6.1930 to 25.8.2020

Our esteemed colleague and Association Member, Alan Vizer, passed away on 25 August, 2020 at the age of ninety. Alan had forty years of loving marriage with his wife, Gwen, and forty years productive service with the Queensland Water Resources Commission.

Although he was born in Sydney, he attended Wynnum State Primary School and Wynnum State High School. After completing Junior, Alan left school and became a cadet draftsman, pursuing his studies at the Central Technical College as an evening student. On 10 March, 1947, Alan was appointed Cadet Draftsman on probation in the Sub Department of Irrigation and Water Supply of the Department of Public Lands after expressing a preference for Engineering drafting

At the tender age of about twenty, Alan found himself working as the survey draftsman at the Danbulla Bridge survey camp on the Atherton Tableland where the Mareeba-Dimbulah Scheme was under construction. He later moved to the Tinaroo Construction Camp and subsequently to Mareeba.

In 1959, Alan was promoted to Senior Draftsman and posted to Rivers and Streams Branch. Jim Callan says: "Alan was a cartographer and a perfectionist in his work. He created hand drawn maps that were lodged with the Lands Department. They were masterpieces. He also created the perfect 'O'"

Alan had a stint in the Commission office in Rockhampton before returning to Rivers and Streams Branch from Rockhampton in a swap with Norm White.

In 1982, Alan was appointed Supervising Draftsman in Groundwater Branch upon the retirement of Bill Belion. It was at this stage that Alan invented the name "Super Vizer" for himself. Never afraid to undertake hands-on work, Alan was a great team member as well as a very effective leader.

In 1986, Groundwater and Surface Water Branches were combined to form Water Resources Division. Alan was appointed Divisional Draftsman.

Alan was very proud of his role in the introduction of Computer Aided Drafting (CAD) to the Commission around 1988. Alan was at the forefront of making submissions to gain the necessary approvals for the spread of CAD throughout the Commission. One of the many initial problems was that the mainframe computer that ran the early CAD software lived at the State Government Computer Centre. A high speed communication link was required to allow its use from other locations. Alan provided the support necessary for the installation of satellite communications to enable the Commission's Ayr office to adopt CAD.

Retirement from the Commission came for Alan in June of 1990. This was a momentous event. The draftsmen always liked to send off senior colleagues in style. Alan was such a popular bloke that he received extra special treatment. A realistic "newspaper" was produced with the headline "Mr V Retires". He was presented with an enormous crossword, called the "Craptic Crossword" in honour of Alan's habit of taking the newspaper under his arm if he had to leave the drawing office for a visit to the little office. Alan was farewelled at a well-attended function after work at a venue near the office and sent home in a taxi.

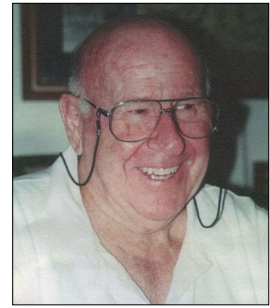
Following his retirement, Alan was an active member of the Water Resources Retirees' Association. He and Gwen attended many functions.

Football, horses, and dogs were enduring interests of Alan. He played half-back in Mareeba. In Brisbane, Alan joined the Commission rugby league team, "The Sharks" who played in the Public Service League until about 1976. The left over team members then formed a touch football team, still called "The Sharks". In 1980, The Sharks touch team joined the Brisbane Touch Association.

Alan was, for a time, a member of the Currumbin Surf Life Saving Club. He rose to the rank of Vice Captain. In one incident, Alan and his crew mates survived the demise of their club's champion surf boat in mountainous seas.

Alan is survived by his wife Gwen and their daughters Cassandra, Lucinda and Natalie. Lucinda (McGlashan) also worked for the Commission.

- adapted from the article compiled by Jon Henry and posted on the Waterysauces website. The page can be seen by following the link from the News page on the website (<http://waterysauces.org.au/navigation/vizertributes.htm>)



*Historically, prior to the advent of modern computer technology, Newsletters were posted to members. There are still a significant number of members who receive the Newsletter by snail mail, which entails a fair amount of work by the Committee, particularly the secretary. By contrast, more members simply read the issue from the website, often using a small device while traveling on a bus. It would be much appreciated if the number of snail mail recipients could be reduced. Please let the secretary know if you are prepared to switch. –Ed.*

### Man Kills Self Before Shooting Wife and Daughter

*It took two or three readings before the editor realised that what he was reading was impossible!!!*

## My Life of Hydrography

### Part 4

Ray Alford

Mackay

The Pioneer river begins its 120-kilometre journey to the sea from the densely vegetated slopes of the Pinnacle ranges. It collects water from numerous small streams and tributaries as it flows north before joining with Cattle Creek, turning east, and weaving its way through the patchwork green paddocks of ripening sugar cane. Rock walls constrict the final journey as it flows through Mackay before pushing forward towards flat top and round top islands.

Normally a docile and sparkling stream, in times of heavy rain the Pioneer fills to form an unstoppable torrent of dirty brown surging and swirling between the riverbanks. Mackay city often takes the brunt of the force with the stony rock wall unable to contain the magnitude of the flow. Large floods originating from either Cattle Creek or Blacks Creek catchments have taken their toll over the years since the valley was settled. Surprisingly, no flood has occurred since settlement from simultaneous flooding from both catchments. When this happens, and it will, the city and surrounds will be in trouble.

My first look at the Pioneer river was from the Sydney Street bridge. The water was clear, movement influenced by the large tides rather than any flood run-off. My thoughts switched between the likelihood of catching mud crabs along the mangrove lined banks and the likelihood of being able to afford accommodation on my first year cadet's wage as well as car payments for my second hand HR Holden.

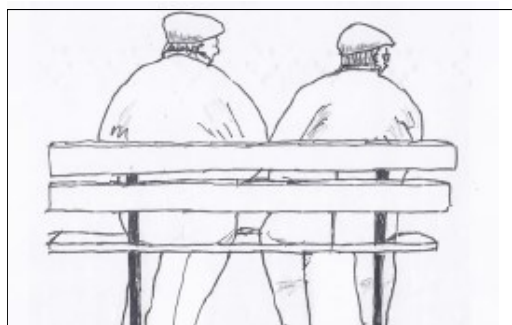
I was one of a number of staff transfers instigated by Surface Water Branch in 1973. My journey north to Mackay took two days, driving in my blue HR. There were several of us on the transfer list who had rendezvoused at Duthies hotel in Rockhampton the previous night. We commiserated rather than celebrated our plight, but the result was the same, that dull feeling that came from too many beers and too late a night. My spirits certainly weren't high that first night in Mackay. My party leader, Geoff Pocock, had also been transferred to Mackay. This was a little unusual as Mackay was usually run as one area with two hydrographic staff. There was only one vehicle and enough gauging stations for one party so the three-person configuration was unusual. I found out later the thinking behind this arrangement was to give Bill Sticklan, the hydrographer in charge, a chance to catch up on office work while the two younger staff attended to the field duties. Whoever thought up that idea did not know Bill.

Bill Sticklan was one of the nicest people I have ever met. Nothing seemed to ruffle him and I can't remember hearing him swear. Bill was in his early

fifties when Geoff and I were transferred to Mackay. In our eyes, that made him old. With his mane of grey hair, he had acquired the nickname "Silver", but despite the outwards appearance of age, Bill was very well preserved. In fact, he much fitter than Geoff or me, and probably stronger too. Bill was a veteran from WW2 and had seen service in both North Africa and New Guinea. Like a lot of former soldiers, he hardly ever talked about the war. When he did, he talked only of the good times and the ways that the soldiers improved their own lot when living in harsh conditions. Only once can I remember Bill talking about the fighting. We were walking into a site along the bed of a small stream under the overhead canopy of palms and trees. It was raining lightly and the canopy was dripping wet. Geoff and I were carrying a stream gauging winch in an old ammunition box when we paused to drink from the clear water of the stream. Bill watched us drink and then said that he was reminded of a time in New Guinea when he stopped to drink from a stream just like this one. He recounted that when he resumed walking, he rounded a bend in the stream and came upon a waterhole full of the putrid bodies of dead Japanese soldiers.

After the war, Bill had worked as a surveyor. On one job, he had surveyed from Adelaide to Ayres Rock, mountain top to mountain top all the way. Bill was a good surveyor and enjoyed his survey work. Each of the gauging stations had a bench mark, a fixed reference point to which the gauge boards were surveyed. The bench marks all had a given level known as a datum. The datum might be state or AHD (Australian Height Datum) if the level was known, but more commonly it was assumed an datum. It was a great benefit to have a real value for the datum level because this allowed the slope of the bed to be calculated between the gauging station and parts of the river where the level was also known.

Bill was always on the lookout for other bench marks to use so that he could survey from them and "tie" the level back to a gauging station.



*"The doctor told me the trouble with my right leg was caused by old age. But that had to be rubbish. My left leg is exactly the same age and there's nothing wrong with it."*

### Kids Make Nutritious Snacks

Do they taste like chicken?



## My Life of Hydrography (continued)

Main Roads and Railways as well as mineral exploration companies were the main providers. These bench marks were identified by a white painted blaze on a tree with the datum point (called the toe) chiselled out at the base of the trunk. Bill could spot a blaze from a mile away even if the white paint had long gone and the blaze was grown over. These survey marks were never discovered close to a gauging station. Geoff and I would groan when Bill found a mark that involved many miles of surveying. If the distance was great, Bill would survey it in sections, over several field trips, until the level was transferred to the GS. This was tedious work but also good training. Bill taught us the proper way to use change points (no screwdrivers) and how to balance fore shots and back shots to eliminate errors. Never once did any of Bill's survey fail to "close" so we never had to repeat any survey. Many years later, I was part of a team surveying levels in the Bowen River after a major flood and was amazed at the speed with which the groundwater staff were completing their surveys. I later found out they didn't bother with a "close", just surveyed in one direction and trusted that they didn't make a mistake. Bill would have been appalled.

The office in Mackay was located in Tennyson Street, just south of the city centre. Compared to the old George Street complex, this office was new and luxurious. Fronted by a row of palm trees, the red brick building was of two-storey construction with the lower story occupied by our department and the upper floor by the DPI. The types of activity working from the building included the Groundwater, Farm Advisory, Licencing, Surveying, Drafting and Administration sections. Hydrography was only a minor part of the water business. Administration consisted of two young (female of course) typists, one clerk, and the Engineer in charge. At that time, engineers were rotated through the regional offices early in their career to gain experience and exposure to the numerous departmental activities. The engineer in charge of Mackay office was Robbie Robson. He was fairly new to the department and certainly not your average engineer. Most of the engineers that I had met in the department appeared aloof (at least to first year cadets) but Robbie was far from that. He was also the first vegetarian that I had come across. Robbie and his wife held the occasional get together for staff and the food was always vegetarian. I'm not sure how committed a vegetarian he was, as he was not averse to ordering a steak when away from home on field trips. He also drove a Morgan sports car, which made him pretty cool in my eyes.

When I first arrived in Mackay, the Engineer in charge was Bevan Faulkner. Bevan was very experienced and had been stationed in many of the offices around the state. He had obtained the nickname "Nutgrass" and was always referred to by this moniker,

at least when he wasn't around. I asked someone why he was called "Nutgrass" and was told that this was because he was into everything. Geoff and I were in the habit of returning to the office at night when we wanted to complete a unit towards our Hydrographic certificate course. It was quiet there, away from our share house, and I could use the drafting equipment to prepare some of my unit work. Nutgrass would sometimes be there as well and would always engage us in conversation. I suspect that his nightly visits to the office were more likely an escape from his homelife than for any pressing need to complete unfinished work. Eventually, Geoff and I would just drive past the office if we saw the lights on as we knew that study was impossible if Nutgrass was in residence.

The Tennyson Street office would later grow in size with additional buildings and importance after the Kinchant Dam project started, but when I was there it was small compared with most of the other regional offices. The staff mixed socially as well as lending a hand at work so I was able to pick up a good working knowledge of the activities of the other groups. The groundwater section was headed by Gerry Gibson, a gruff ex driller who knew the business well and Trevor Jones, a groundwater hydrologist from Longreach. One of the activities of the section was to monitor the water levels in hundreds of observation bores. To this end, one staff member would "dip" these wells on continual rotation so that a history of the varying aquifer levels could be made. This person was continually in the field except for one day a week when he would return to the office to do paperwork. For obvious reasons, he was called Friday. Most of the Mackay staff were given nicknames by the office draftsman, Ross Breadsall, or Breto we called him. There was a survey assistant called Aspro (a slow working dope), Grumpy (one of the typists), Silver for Bill, and Abdulla the butcher (the GW hydrologist after his love of knives.) I was christened "Lurch" due to my imitation of the voice of the Addams Family butler. The name morphed to Butler and I was called this for many years by my colleagues.

The instrumentation at the Mackay gauging stations consisted nearly exclusively of Gas Electric (GE) recorders. There were only a couple of these in the Brisbane area so I had little knowledge of them. Geoff had some experience with GEs, but I suspect he was no expert. Bill was not really interested in the instrumentation and left the servicing of the recorders to Geoff and me. The reliability of the GE was not great (which Bill often countered by making more frequent visits).

### Answers to Terry's Trivia (page 11)

- 1.(ii) 18. 2. Arafura, Coral, Tasman, Timor. 3. (v) Bengali. 4. (v) Unicorn. 5. (iv) Michael Phelps. 6. (iii) Mouse. 7. (iii) Keith Richards. 8. (iv) 80. 9. (i) Pat Rafter. 10. (iv) Wasp. 11. (iii) Kalimantan. 12. (ii) Ballina.

**Local High School Dropouts Cut in Half**  
Chainsaw Massacre all over again!

# Memories of Leslie Dam

## Part 2

### Hector Macdonald

Preparing sites for the construction of the facilities associated with concrete production involved a considerable amount of earth works. I was assigned a team of plant operators who drove bulldozers, graders, power shovels, scrapers and other earthmoving machinery. Although I could read the plans which showed the work which had to be done to produce the final ground profiles, and could set out the works (with the help of the surveyors) to show where and how much excavation was required, I had no idea at all of the capabilities of the plant and how it should be used to get the work done in the fastest possible time. Bulldozers excavating earth and boulders had to be coordinated with front end loaders used to load trucks, and this in turn led to the need for traffic control on the site. The plant operators knew the capabilities of their machines and how to get the most out of them. My technique was to talk to each plant operator individually. I would try to use their own language and mannerisms (I had grown up in Paddington and had as good a Queensland accent as anyone else) and explain the job in simple terms in relation to the ground without reference to the plans.

When I had explained what had to be done I would then say, "It's a hell of a big job – I'm buggered if I know how you are going to do it!" This approach never failed. "Just leave it to me boss, I'll fix the bastard for you", was the usual reply. A good plant operator needed to have a job explained once only. He could work flat out, hour after hour, day after day, stopping only for meal breaks and servicing of the plant, until the job was complete. When a job had been finished – and it was invariably done well and on time – I would tell them how amazed I was that they had been able to do it. They were good tradesmen and they appreciated being given credit when it was due.

At the end of the day when a particular part of the project was completed I would visit the canteen – although there was a partition separating the staff canteen from the men's canteen there was a common bar which ran the full length of the two areas and as these two areas were at right angles to one another you could see into the men's canteen from the staff bar – and if I saw one of my plant operators there I would buy him a beer. It was money well spent. Buying a beer for the troops was a practice I learnt at Leslie Dam and which I continued throughout my civilian and military career. It was not a matter of being kind or generous – rather it was a case of using sensible man-management techniques, which I always found to be highly effective.

As well as the excavation of soil and rock there was often a boulder which was too large for a Caterpillar D8 dozer to handle. This meant blasting or, as it

was known locally, 'shooting'. The powder monkey was a European named Joe Patzooka or something similar. I spent a few days with him while he was working at the site and learnt the elements of how to use explosives. Rock formations were drilled using jackhammers supplied by air from mobile compressors. (Later in the job a "compressor house" was established which supplied air to drive power tools over most of the project site). Sticks of gelignite (each weighing eight ounces) were placed in the holes. The last stick of gelignite to go in had a detonator inserted in it. The hole for the detonator was made with a wooden skewer, similar to those used by butchers to hold roasts together. Detonators used were the electric type. Each had two thin wires covered in plastic running from one end. These were hooked up to an electrical circuit and were ignited using a device consisting of a generator and a condenser. Detonators had various degrees of delays built into them (measured in terms of milli-seconds) and this allowed the sequence of firing throughout the rock formation to be controlled. Sometimes when a large boulder needed to be broken up it was not necessary to drill it. It was simply plastered with a plastic explosive whose trade name was Plastergel. The lump of plastic explosive (so called because it had the texture of plasticine) stuck to the surface of the boulder, and the detonator was located inside the lump of plastic explosive.

It was the training in the use of earth moving plant and in the use of explosives at Leslie Dam that helped me to take up a job as a troop commander in a field squadron of the Royal Australian Engineers a couple of years later. Apart from experience in the use of plant, there was an unlimited variety of four-wheel drive vehicles on site. I drove through the bush surrounding the dam site until I was sick of it. Years later in the army, I sat in Land Rovers, as driver, front seat passenger and even as 'cargo' on metal seats in the rear, for more hours, days and weeks than I can remember. I got to the stage where I could not bear the thought of bouncing through the bush in any vehicle at all – the worst vehicle being armoured personnel carriers. This probably explains why today, as I drive around Kenmore on weekends and head off to work through the traffic on week mornings, I can't help but feel that the businessmen who drive their Landcruisers, Range Rovers and whatever else along the bitumen, looking important and changing gear at every possible opportunity, might not have had the good fortune to have had as much fun as I did in my days at Leslie Dam and later on in the Army.

The organisation of the workforce at Leslie Dam and the culture which existed throughout the workforce and the life of the townspeople was something that caught my attention and which influenced my thinking in later life.

**Cold Wave Linked to Temperatures**

Who would have thought!



## Memories of Leslie Dam (continued)

Alan Taylor was an Executive Engineer Division I (Class 13 on Schedule I of the Public Service pay scale at the time and earning around £3,000 per year). He considered that since he was Project Engineer with a workforce of around 200 and responsible for a project costing around £2 million, he should have had a more senior position. In this respect he was right, and during the course of the project he was promoted to a Class 15 and made a Senior Engineer, Division II. Taylor was a strong-minded and ambitious man and this was reflected in the way he ran the job. I could not help but notice how much the whole operation, both during working hours and also out of hours, reminded me of a military organisation. Class distinction was overt. There were separate working areas, living areas, eating areas and drinking areas for the staff and the men. Even the town was segregated – houses only for staff, prefab huts for the workers. People such as foremen and cost clerks in the office were not staff and did not have staff privileges. The staff were the equivalent of the officers, and the workmen were the equivalent of the soldiers, the foremen and cost clerks were really the civilian equivalent of the sergeants and warrant officers. Whereas the army recognised these three distinct groupings (officers, senior NCOs and other ranks) the civilian system at Leslie Dam had no equivalent of a sergeant's mess. Hence the foremen and gangers, and the non-staff office workers such as cost clerks and store managers had to mix with the workers. Taylor ran the camp as if he was the commanding officer. Things ran in an organised and ordered manner. There was strict accountability for stores and equipment. The chain of command was established and everyone knew who his boss was. Orders were clear and unambiguous. Timings were critical. Checks were made by supervisors at all levels to ensure that the orders were being implemented. It was a system that I could understand and to which I had no trouble adapting.

Taylor believed in management by walking around. This caught my eye and so one day early in the project I asked Bob Kimber, the Senior Works Supervisor who shared the works site projects with me, about Taylor's background. He told me Taylor had been a major in the army. This figured. I never gave the matter much further thought over the years. In 1997 while proof reading the chapter on Queensland in the third volume of the history of the Corps of Royal Australian Engineers (1919 - 1975), I noticed that Major A R Taylor was the officer commanding 28 Field Pack Squadron in the Citizen Military Forces at Kelvin Grove in the early 1950s. It is amazing how clear certain aspects of life can become with both the right information and hindsight.

Taylor had worked at Tinaroo Dam under Learmonth who was a Lieutenant in the RAE in World War II. No doubt Tinaroo had also been run along military lines. Bearing in mind that Fred Haigh, the Commissioner, was the most dedicated soldier one could meet, it is not hard to understand how all this came about.

As the year progressed the workforce and the staff numbers at the dam increased. An engineer from the Sydney Water Board, Geoff Ward, aged in his early forties was appointed an Engineer Division I and became Taylor's second-in-command. He and his family lived in the staff house next to Taylor. A mechanical engineer, Bill Macdonald, same rank and age group, also arrived on transfer from the Co-ordinator-General's Department. He and his family lived in a staff house next to the Wards. Other engineers came on site. Jim Mienert, a classmate from University who joined the Commission after graduation, came from Moogerah Dam where he had spent about six months cleaning up the site. Jim was given the tail tower area to establish. Bob Hitchcock, a mechanical engineer from Head Office, also visited from time to time.

The office staff consisted of Jack Hicks, Harry Horne, Mick Connelly, Phil Guthrie, Ken Spressor, Bert Meale and Alex, who was very involved in the union movement and who was not popular with Taylor. Kev Kennedy and Des Rayner ran the store. Working hours at the camp were 7.30 until 4.30.

Most days we all went to the canteen after work and drank. When the canteen closed at 6 we went to the mess for dinner. After dinner we waited until 7 p.m. when the canteen opened again. It was supposed to shut at 9 pm but often went way past this time. The canteen manager was Frank Leach, a Pom who was in his mid-fifties. The main activity in the canteen of a night was darts, and the champion was Des Rayner. When he was in form he could put three darts in the triple twenty area.

After I had spent my first weekend at Leslie Dam it became clear to me that the social life both at the dam and also in the town of Warwick was non-existent. The logical thing for me to do was to try to get back to Brisbane for weekends. In this respect I was rather lucky. *But, dear reader, you will have to wait to the next edition to learn how - Ed.*



**St Barnabas Bulletin Board**  
Volunteers urgently required for Saturday's working bee. Church Hall needs to be painted badly.

**If Strike Isn't Settled Quickly, It May Last Awhile**  
Ya' think?!

# HEALTH *and beauty*

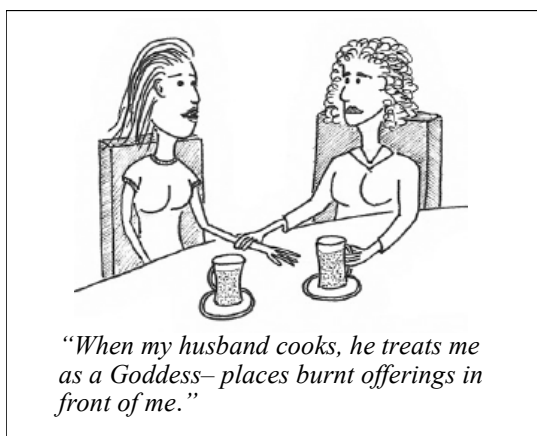
## Family Planning Old Style

A friend of ours recently provided us with some snippets of history regarding her female ancestors. Her great grandmother decided that she had borne enough children so she developed a great interest in literature and sat in her rocking chair every night reading until 3 a.m.

Our friend's grandmother, having delivered three children, decided that a hysterectomy was the only sure way of avoiding a further pregnancy. She studied up all the symptoms she would need to tell a specialist she had and took herself off to the city. The specialist agreed to carry out the procedure, but only after the birth of the baby she was carrying – our friend's father!

In my view the four greatest inventions of humankind are:

1. Language. This made it possible for homo sapiens to transmit life skills.
2. Irrigated agriculture. This freed a high percentage of the population from the drudgery of hunting and gathering and started civilisation as we know it.
3. The printing press. This made wide dissemination of knowledge possible to the vast majority of the population.
4. Reliable contraception. This gave (at least) half the population freedom of choice in so many ways.



## Unfair Sex

In the Victorian era, women were exhorted to “close their eyes and think of England” while their husbands took their pleasure in exercising their conjugal rights. In earlier times, women were expected to enjoy sex because it was thought that orgasm was essential to conception. This was bad news for a woman who became pregnant as a result of rape because it was deemed that to become pregnant she must have experienced orgasm which meant she had enjoyed it and therefore it could not have been rape.

## Medical Treatment Old Style

Medicine has certainly shown great advances in the last couple of hundred years.

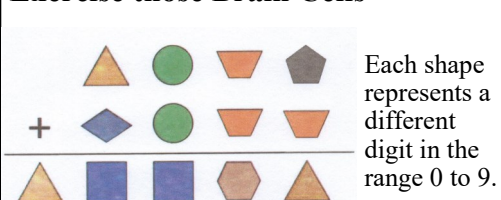
William Redfern was a doctor in Sydney while Lachlan Macquarie was Governor. His notebook included a ‘cure for the evil’ – scrofula or tuberculosis of the neck – that involved rubbing the sores with a leg cut from a live toad, which he noted would ‘cause the parts to swell very much for about 12 hours, and give violent pain’. There were instructions on making tincture of opium, a poultice for cancer made from Turkish figs boiled in milk, instructions for making a wash for sore eyes from lead, opium and white vitriol, and a recipe for peppermint oil used to treat toothache. Onion juice was prescribed as a remedy for baldness. There was also a recipe for making gold.

An early history of the Rum Hospital related that cupping was a prevalent remedy and it is recorded that one patient suffering from brain fever had 2 lb of blood removed in the morning and 3 lb in the evening. He was then allowed to get up, and died. Dysentery was also treated by bleeding and small doses of calomel (mercury chloride). Mercury was also the standard treatment for venereal diseases.

from *Macquarie* by Grantlee Kieza

*Aren't we glad we live in the 21st century? - Ed*

## Exercise those Brain Cells



When the two four-digit numbers are added what is the Total?



## Answer to last Issue's Teaser

The year of COVID-19 is 2020, a leap year. James, being married, has lived at least 20 years. He must have been born in a leap year on 29 February; otherwise his birthday would occur on a Saturday every five or six years.

Working backwards, we count that it takes 28 years for a Leap Saturday to recur. So he was born on 29 February 1992.

## Juvenile Court to Try Shooting Defendant

See if that works better than a fair trial!

## A Warning About Money

As we all know, this pandemic has had a huge impact on health and economies in so many nations. But money itself contains a warning.

In 390 BC Rome was attacked by a party of Gauls trying to scale the Capitoline Hill. But the sacred geese kept there issued a warning and the attack was averted. In gratitude, the Romans erected a temple but they didn't dedicate it to the geese that had saved them but to the goddess of warnings, *Juno Moneta*.

Either next door to the temple or in the temple itself was the building where all the Roman coins were produced and it was given the name of the temple, *Moneta*. Although by the time the word passed through Romanesque languages to English inevitable vowel changes occurred, such a building has retained the name as a *mint*.

In the *Moneta*, the Romans produced *moneta*, literally warnings. The French took the word and dropped the T so that by the time it came into English it was already *money*. But our adjective *monetary*, meaning *related to money*, keeps the reference to the temple and the angry geese emitting a warning, alive and well.

So don't be a goose about money.

## COVID-19 DISASTERS

It is with great sadness that I have to mention the loss of a few local businesses as a result of COVID-19. A local bra manufacturer has gone bust, a submarine company has gone under, a manufacturer of food blenders has gone into liquidation, a dog kennel has had to call in the retrievers and a company supplying paper for origami enthusiasts has folded. The local strip club has gone tits up, Interflora is pruning its business and Dyno-rod has gone down the drain. The saddest one though is the ice cream van man found dead covered in nuts and raspberry sauce. He couldn't take it any more and topped himself.

Sent in by Noel Dowling

### We've got you Covid

To be sung to "Don't Cry for Me, Argentina"

Be proud of us, Anastacia  
The truth is in this Pandemic  
We all obeyed you:  
At your insistence  
We closed our borders  
Kept social distance.

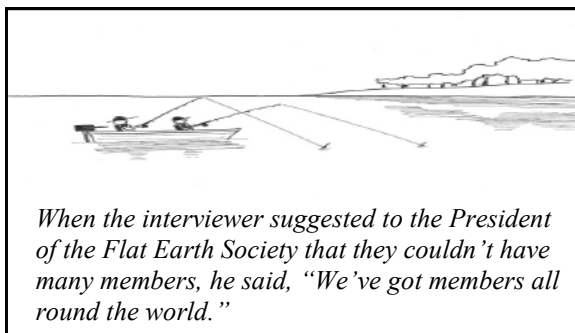
### A Sign of the Times

On a US Highway billboard

**BAN PRE-SHREDDED CHEESE  
MAKE AMERICA GRATE AGAIN**

**Terry's Trivia** - from the 2020 Christmas lunch  
Answers on page 7.

1. What percentage of Oz is classified as desert: (i) 8; (ii) 18; (iii) 28; (iv) 38; (v) 48.
2. Name the four seas off the coast of Australia.
3. The pre-dominant language of Bangladesh is: (i) Hindi; (ii) Urdu; (iii) Tamil; (iv) Assamese, (v) Bengali.
4. The national animal of Scotland is the: (i) Scottish Terrier; (ii) Highland Bull; (iii) Red Deer; (iv) Haggis; (v) Unicorn.
5. Which athlete holds the record for most (23) Olympic golds: (i) Usain Bolt; (ii) Shane Gould; (iii) Carl Lewis (iv) Michael Phelps; (v) Mark Spitz.
6. Speedy Gonzales was a: (i) Duck; (ii) Wolf; (iii) Mouse; (iv) Rabbit; (v) Dog.
7. Which Rolling Stone hurt himself when he fell from his library ladder: (i) Mick Jagger; (ii) Bill Wyman; (iii) Keith Richards; (iv) Ronnie Wood; (v) Charlie Watts.
8. How many languages are spoken in PNG: (i) 20; (ii) 40; (iii) 60; (iv) 80; (v) 100.
9. Which Australian tennis player was ranked world No 1 for one week: (i) Pat Rafter; (ii) Leyton Hewitt; (iii) Pat Cash; (iv) Nick Kyrgios; (v) Sam Stosur.
10. Vespa in Italian means: (i) Bike; (ii) Snake; (iii) Fly; (iv) Wasp; (v) Butterfly.
11. Indonesia is relocating its capital to the island of: (i) Sumatra; (ii) Java; (iii) Kalimantan (Borneo); (iv) Sulawesi (Celebes); (v) Irian Jaya (West half of PNG).
12. Which of these Irish towns is Joe Biden's ancestral home?: (i) Limerick; (ii) Ballina; (iii) Louth; (iv) Lismore; (v) Kilkenny; (vi) Killarney; (vii) Blamey.



When the interviewer suggested to the President of the Flat Earth Society that they couldn't have many members, he said, "We've got members all round the world."

### Miners Refuse to Work after Death

*No-good-for-nothing lazy so-and-sos!*



## Book Club

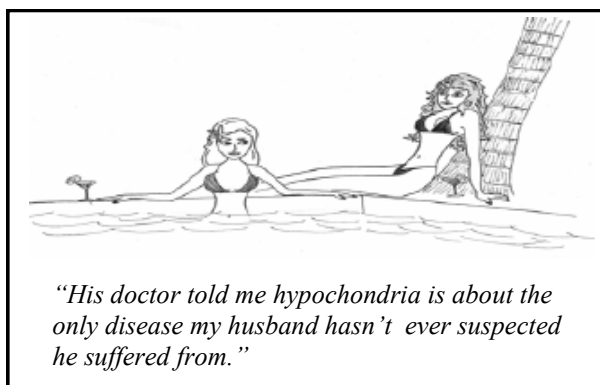
*The Dickens Boy* by Tom Kenneally tells the imagined tale of the tenth child of Charles Dickens, Edward Bulwer Lytton Dickens, known as Plorn (short for Plornishmaroontigoonter – the nickname given by his father).

Plorn consistently proves unable ‘to apply himself’ to school or life, so aged sixteen, he is sent, as his brother Alfred was before him, to Australia in 1868 with a terrible secret. He has never read a word of his father's work. He is sent out to a 2000-square-mile station in remotest New South Wales to learn to become a man, and a gentleman stockman, from the most diverse and toughest of companions. In the outback he becomes enmeshed with Paakantji, colonists, colonial-born, ex-convicts, ex-soldiers, and very few women.

He encounters the same veneration of his father as was rampant in England. Against this backdrop, and featuring cricket tournaments, horse-racing, bushrangers, sheep droving, shifty stock and station agents, frontier wars and first encounters with Australian women, Plorn meets extraordinary people and enjoys wonderful adventures as he works to prove himself.

This was a fascinating read, particularly for a Dickens fan like me. It only covers the first few years of Plorn's Australian adventures and, naturally, I googled his subsequent progress. Also interesting but not nearly as well told.

**Ian Pullar**



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*Mythos*, a 2017 book by Stephen Fry is a retelling of a number of ancient myths selected by Fry. This book was followed in 2018 by *Heroes*, a retelling of myths about Greek heroes.

Fry states at the beginning of each book that no knowledge of Greek Mythology is necessary for one to appreciate the stories and that there is “absolutely nothing academic or intellectual about Greek mythology; it is addictive, entertaining, approachable and astonishingly human.”

One review commends Fry for putting his name to constructive use and that his “distinctive voice undoubtedly adds something lively, humorous and intimate to mythology’s psychological dimension. People who enjoy his media personality and particular style of post-Wodehouse English drollery are in for a treat.”

Indeed, Zeus seems to have spent much of his time flying around looking at nymphs bathing naked. If he particularly fancied one he would metamorphose to anything he thought would give him a good chance of getting his way with the nymph, including even her own husband.

The fact that, in Greek mythology, there are major and minor gods for just about anything you can think of provides Fry with plenty of opportunity for humorous quips. My particular favourite is his description of Priapus, the god of erections, as the minor god of the major boner.

Another great read is Bill Bryson’s successor to *A Short History of Nearly Everything – The Body, A Guide for Occupants*.

We spend our whole lives in one body and yet most of us have practically no idea how it works or what goes on inside it. Bill Bryson sets out to explore the human body, how it functions and its remarkable ability to heal itself. The book is full of extraordinary facts and astonishing stories; a brilliant, often very funny attempt to understand the miracle of our physical and neurological makeup.

**Helen Sheu** (wife of Ken Watson).

