



# WATERY SAUCES OLDIES and BOLDIES

Newsletter No 94

March 2021

NEWSLETTER OF THE WATER RESOURCES RETIREES ASSOCIATION

## 2021 AGM ...

Looking back over past newsletters reveals that each March an AGM is announced, almost invariably for April.

As members will be aware, because of the restrictions imposed by governments to manage the Covid-19 Pandemic, the 2020 AGM of WRRRA could not be held until November. That meeting failed to fill all the vacancies, although that situation was rectified quite quickly (see adjacent note). The new Committee realised that to hold an AGM in April would give them tenure for less than six months. There still remains a degree of uncertainty about what restrictions will remain in place (or be reinstituted) by April. The Committee sensibly decided that, under these circumstances, it would be desirable and prudent to defer the holding of the AGM to a date to be advised later in the year – perhaps September.

This will allow the new Committee to organise events which normally require lead time. In particular, the planned major event(s) of next year – the centenary of *The Water Act* – will fully occupy the attention of its members. More information concerning this undertaking can be found on page 4

*I was reminded at the Christmas luncheon that it was twenty years (and now a bit more) since Sun-Water was created as a stand-alone GOC. Doesn't time fly? And I recalled that, at the invitation of then CEO Peter Noonan, I had undertaken the role of MC for the dinner that launched the new entity and its name which until then had been a secret. I remember (almost) doing a soft shoe shuffle with Carolyn Maddocks.*

*Twenty years without a name change would appear to be most unusual in this era. Perhaps though, it is like the old axe with two new heads and ten new handles but still the same old axe.*

*Until next time, au reservoir.*

**Ian Pullar, Editor**

## The New Committee

Following the failure of the AGM to fill the vacancies on the Committee, the “recruiting officers” swung into action. Chris Robson, who had been elected as a member, agreed to become Vice President. Peter McMahon volunteered to take on the major role of Secretary and Greg Claydon filled the casual vacancy to become a member. We welcome all these fine gentlemen to our ranks.

Brief biographies of Peter and Greg can be found on pages 2, 3 and 4. Chris's was published in Newsletter 93.

## Patronage

As reported in the December Newsletter, following the recent State election all of DNRME's water functions were transferred to the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water under Director-General Frankie Carroll.

In line with past practice, the committee was preparing to ask him take on the prestigious position of co-patron of our Association, when it was announced in the media that Mr Carroll had been appointed to a job in Victoria and so would not be available to accept such an honour.

To date, a ‘permanent’ replacement CEO has not been appointed, so we will continue on with only one patron for the time being.

## Future Activities

It has been customary now for many years to have a get-together of members in February, latterly with a guest speaker. However at this stage the Covid restrictions are not clear in terms of venues, allowable numbers of attendees etc. There must also be some doubt about how many of our members are interested in congregating under current conditions..

Accordingly, the Committee has had no choice other than to defer activities until such time as we embrace the ‘new normal’.

*The contributions at the bottom of the pages were supplied by Ross Carruthers from his extensive collection. Don't blame me - Ed.*

## **New Secretary Peter McMahon**

I started work with the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission as a junior clerk in April 1963. So started some 44 years of working in the State Public Service. For the most part it was enjoyable. I started in the Records section with other young people starting out on their careers. I spent around 5 years in Head Office learning about the various parts of the organisation.

They were good times. I started to learn shorthand with the aim of being a court reporter. Doug Rohl was my offsider in Records at the time and his Dad and brother worked down at Parliament House. I eventually stopped this as I thought technology would take over and make these people redundant.

Golf was my main focus and I enjoyed playing every Saturday and Sunday. Thinking back, I probably should have made this my career focus but I was never good enough to make it as a professional.

### **Wuruma Dam**

I was appointed Works Clerk 2 at Wuruma Dam in 1968 when the project was nearing completion. It was the start of my 12 years on dam projects all over the State. It was the start of my learning on all aspects of running a project office. There was a day labour force of some 300 employees working three shifts six days a week.

I started at the bottom, being shown the ropes by pretty much all who worked in the office. The Project Engineer was Geoff Ward – a gentle but firm man who had worked on the Snowy Mountain Hydro Scheme. He was later to finish his career in Head Office and lived in Claymead Street, Wynnum North not far from where I live now.

My boss was the Works Accountant, Harry Horne and other people in the office included Reg Guthrie, his son Peter, (who later died in Bundaberg after falling from his horse), Len Fleming, Ken Spresser, Bob Marshall, Des Rayner and Dan Geaney.

These people played a big part in my early development. Over the years I was to work with them on other projects. There was a good culture of looking after all who worked on these projects not only those who worked in the office.

The Single Men's Mess was run by a Contractor, Bob Hastie. I think he previously had the Mess contracts at Moogerah and Leslie Dams. Bob became a good friend and I spent a lot of time with him outside of work either at the races or the golf course.

### **Lower Lockyer Irrigation Project, Atkinson Dam.**

On 29 May, I was transferred to Atkinson Dam. Jim Mienert was the Project Engineer and Kev Kennedy was the Works Accountant. Bevan Faulkner was one of the young Engineers there along with Robbie Robson. Roger Callaghan was the Cost Clerk and one of the others living in the Single Staff quarters.

Leo Battalini and Charlie Paolucci were two of

the Works Supervisors and every so often there would be animated conversations between the two with raised voices and hands indicating they weren't in agreement with each other.

I enjoyed my time there. During the week after work, we played table tennis and shuttlecock with some trips to the leading Hotel in Coominya. Jim Mienert came down to show us how to play table tennis. I think he could have played lefthanded and still beaten us.

### **Maroon Dam**

On 23 September, 1970, I was transferred to Maroon Dam where Geoff Ward was the Project Engineer. Ian Hoskins was the Works Accountant and Ken Spresser and Dan Geaney were there in the Single Staff quarters. Again this was good because it meant every Friday I could get back to Brisbane to play golf and catch up with friends.

My cousin, Len and his wife Gail had been transferred from Wuruma to Maroon so it was good to catch up with them and their increased family. Dan Geaney, Ken Spresser and Reg Guthrie were also there and Bob Hastie had the contract for the Single Men's Mess.

John Morton replaced Geoff Ward as Project Engineer and apart from running the construction activities well, he was also very supportive of the social activities. Staff come and go on projects but Ian Ferrier, Doug and Carol Peterson (Carol worked in the office), and Phil Byrne were some that come to mind.

Like all the Projects I worked on there was a good community feeling. The social club operated well putting on film nights and the beer tickets sold in the Canteen meant there was money available to be used for the various activities the social club ran.

### **Glenlyon Dam**

In October 1972, I was transferred to Pike Creek Dam (Glenlyon Dam). The Works Supervisor was Charlie Paolucci and our role was to establish a temporary camp firstly and establish the permanent camp for the dam construction workforce. My role was to establish the office, order the stores, pay the wages and establish contacts in Stanthorpe and Texas for all our requirements.

Bob Sainsbury was our Foreman and our surveyor was Gunther Froemel and I hired a cook to cater for our small group. This was not an easy task as very often a good shearer's cook had drinking problems. We were lucky and didn't have any real problems.

Our quarters were the basic single men's quarters with a few married quarters, one of which I used as a temporary store.

After some time, I asked for some administrative help and Ken Kennedy from Beardmore Dam was transferred in January 1973, firstly as a single man, with Fran and the family coming later. Denise Kennedy was born on 28 August, 1973, and I was honoured to become her Godfather. Ken and Fran and family became very good friends.

Did you hear about the restaurant on the moon?  
The food was good but it had no atmosphere.

### **New Secretary (cont)**

Malcolm Pegg was the Engineer from Head Office who had overall responsibility for the Project.

One of the first things I did was to join Tenterfield Golf Club. Hugh and Alison Roberts who ran the Telegraph Hotel were originally from Wynnum so for good or bad, I spent three out of four weekends in their hotel. They both played golf and often had visitors from the Wynnum Golf Club down for a few days.

I was a member of both clubs for a number of years because that is where I met Denise Fergusson. Deb McMahon later married my brother, Ray. Denise and I became engaged and were married in October 1974.

#### **Upper Warrill Creek Diversion**

On 25 February 1974, I was transferred to Upper Warrill Creek Diversion where we set up a temporary office and camp at Aratula. Weekends were either travelling to Tenterfield or Wynnum but more often it was off to Tenterfield.

#### **Bingegang Weir**

I was next appointed Works Clerk 1 Bingegang Weir. However, apart from an initial visit to the site, it was decided that I would instead go to the raising of Awoonga Dam. Work on raising the old dam was completed. A new operational office was to be used also as our construction office.

However, work was brought to a standstill when problems were discovered after further investigations of the foundations. Later, when the design changes were complete, construction started again. The new office was a casualty of these changes and was demolished.

#### **Clare Weir**

I was next transferred to Clare Weir. We were reunited with Ken and Fran Kennedy and others I had previously worked with including Daryl and Lyn Brigden, Honk and Daphne Morrison, Pedro Parnell, Jack Pierpoint and many others. Graeme Allen was the Project Engineer. Work on the Weir was well underway and I walked into an office and Store running very efficiently.

With the completion of construction, I was to be transferred to the Bundaberg Irrigation Area in March, 1979. However, I woke up on the Saturday morning, (two days before the removal truck was to arrive to take our furniture), to hear strange sounds coming from the Weir. I walked up to the weir to see the last bank structure disappearing into the very flooded Burdekin River.

Many calls to Head Office, (not sure who I called, could have been Malcolm Pegg, Alan Taylor or Ian Hoskins) resulted in my transfer being cancelled and our stay at Clare Weir extended for a further 17 months.

Dave Tardrew was commissioned to supervise the reconstruction which he did very well. SMEC had de-

signed the original structure so they were keen to find out what had happened. Special funding was provided by the Commonwealth which meant additional financial reports were required by them.

It was good to reunite with Dave and we were able to continue our friendships with the local community as well as with the workforce who arrived to complete the reconstruction.

Half the Weir had to be replaced which meant creating sheet piling coffer dams to allow the dewatering so that concrete could be poured. I always enjoyed (usually daily) going down to the worksite to watch progress. It broke up the monotony of sitting in the office.

In January, our daughter Leigh Letitia was born at the Ayr Hospital. I think Daryl and Lyn Brigden looked after Michael while I was there for the birth.

In November, 1980, we left Clare Weir to take up my appointment as Senior Clerk Construction.

#### **Brisbane**

As you might have picked up from what I have written above, I very much enjoyed my time on the Construction projects meeting and working with many people whose experience and knowledge made me a much better person and gave me the confidence to branch out and get involved in various local community issues.

In Head Office in Construction Branch, I had responsibility for the financial and administrative aspects of all the construction projects. This enabled me to travel to the sites on a regular basis which helped my transition back into Head Office.

After a few years I moved into the Operations Division under Peter Bevan. I didn't have much knowledge in this area and I appreciated the guidance given by Peter and also Doug Flanders.

I then moved into the Finance area and reunited with Ian Hoskins. I also enjoyed this time particularly the extra responsibility when we merged with the Department of Primary Industries.

Thereafter, it starts to blur a little as to what I actually did. Dave Tardrew was back in Head Office and I was working with him for a period of time. This was around 2000 and the confusion about what would happen on 1 January.

The last few years were not the most enjoyable and I was glad to take early retirement; however my timing was not great because the GFC followed shortly after.

I have enjoyed my retirement which has allowed me to do things such as driving taxis, becoming a funeral director's assistant and caretaker at a retreat house. I would never have imagined this in my early years.

And I continue to battle the little white golf ball whenever I can.

*To tell a story out of school...One Christmas, a consignment of bottles of scotch was delivered to Construction Branch on Floor 18 of Mineral House. These Christmas presents from a contractor were labelled for the recipients; M.Pegg, N.Ullman, P. McMahon. Perhaps this last was intended for Pat, but he wasn't on Floor 18. Col Hazel assured our new Secretary that as he was the only P. McMahon on Floor 18, it must be meant for him. And out of the kindness of his heart, Col helped him bring it to an appropriate conclusion.*

Did you hear Julie Andrews will no longer endorse cheap lipstick?  
She explained 'the super colour fragile lipstick gives me halitosis'.

## New Committee Member Greg Claydon

Greg started with the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission in 1974 as a State Government scholarship holder, studying agricultural engineering at the Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education (now the University of Southern Queensland) in Toowoomba. The start of his studies was slightly delayed because the January 1974 floods went six feet over the roof caps of the family home in East Ipswich and a bit of cleaning up had to be done. Arguably, matters to do with water have had a big influence on Greg's life.

After graduation, Greg started his "rotation" with the Rivers and Streams Branch in Brisbane, mostly working on farm water supplies designs. Then in 1979, he was off to Emerald for a year to be involved in irrigation area operations and maintenance, design and construction and some farm water supplies work – and wrestling with irrigation induced high water tables and salinity. Well, the one year turned into six, he met and married Andrea, and their first son, Richard, was born.

Design and development of the expanded Burdekin River Irrigation Project beckoned in 1985 and the family moved to Ayr, where son Michael was born. An opportunity emerged in 1987 for Greg to become District Engineer, St George and the family moved there, where son Stephen was born. At the next move in 1992 to Toowoomba, where Greg was appointed as DPI-Water's Regional Manager, South West, Andrea was adamant that she wasn't going to have a boy in every town!

As machinery of government changes progressed through the 1990s, Greg eventually became Regional Services Director, South of the department of whatever and eventually worked out of Toowoomba for about ten years, except for 1995, when he was seconded to the Commonwealth Government in Canberra to bring some state (practical?) experience to national water reforms and the National Landcare Program. This was a period of relatively rapid change in water management and the water industry within a broader natural resources portfolio with new water legislation, changed water institutional and organisational arrangements, and evolving plans, policies, markets, knowledge, engagement processes and systems.

The claws of "head office" eventually clutched Greg back to Brisbane in 2002 to lead and manage the State's water planning programs and then to variously direct the Queensland Water Taskforce, strategic water initiatives and water resources strategy. These were the relatively "heady" days of specifying the first water entitlements separate from land, legislative control of the taking of certain overland flows, regional water supply strategies to combat the millennium drought, compromises and agreements to get the first Murray-Darling Basin Plan and countless other challenges like floods, water literacy (information, communication

and trust), water prices, over/under consultation and over/under infrastructure development, be it "Cubbie Station", "purified recycled water", "the revised Bradfield Scheme", "coal seam gas water", and other things, real and unreal.

After a short period as Acting Deputy-Director General, Water and Catchments Division, Greg said "goodbye" to the newly fragmented State Government water arrangements in Queensland in 2012 and moved to Perth to lead and manage water (quantity and quality) science and planning activities with the Western Australian Department of Water. That department does "all things water" – except for physically supplying water and sewerage services to customers (which is done statewide mostly by the Water Corporation). As the "sandgropers" say: "Things are different in WA" – sometimes "good-different".

Greg retired from full-time work in WA in 2018 and moved back to Brisbane where he currently enjoys time with family and friends, four grandchildren, a grand dog, travel when safe to do so, some pro-bono and consulting work, and, of course, contributing to the WRRRA!

## Marking a Milestone 100 Years On

In the last edition of this Newsletter, WRRRA announced that as next year, 2022, will be the centenary of the enactment of the *Irrigation Act of 1922*, the Association was considering appropriate ways of commemorating this significant milestone. We have set up a sub-committee chaired by Bruce Pearce to formulate plans to celebrate.

As part of the planning, it is important that the wider membership has input into the process. Accordingly, members were invited to forward comments and ideas to the committee. To date no suggestions have been received. Once again we issue the invitation.

Bruce would love to hear from members and would be more than happy to chat to anyone who would like to have his or her say. He suggests that the telephone would make the conversation easier (phone 3289 6297). Alternatively his email address is

[brucepearce@bigpond.com](mailto:brucepearce@bigpond.com)

He would be happy to phone you back should you so desire.

The sub-committee is mindful of the great success of the annual get-together in Central Region organised by Mike McKenna and considers that this could be a model or a starting point for organising events that will put members of the 'water family' in contact with each other.

It is certainly hoped that there will be celebrations in regional communities where the results of our work over the century are obvious and irrigated agriculture continues to thrive.

What do you call it when you mix alcohol with American Literature?  
Tequila Mockingbird

## Vale – Hugh Robert (Hughie) Byrnes 2 September 1935 – 22 January 2021

Hugh Robert (Hughie) Byrnes was born on 2 September 1935 at Atherton on the Tablelands. He started his schooling at Kairi State School followed by one year of High School in Cairns and then one year of education at Abergowie College. He then left the schooling environment and worked for a while on the family farm and driving trucks.

In 1954 Hughie started work with the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission at Tinaroo Falls Dam. In that same year Hughie also undertook his then compulsory period of National Service training. The NS training was done at Wacol in Brisbane after which he went back to Tinaroo to work on the dam's construction and the Irrigation Area's Channels and Pipelines. In his time at Tinaroo, he gained most of his Certificates of Competency in operating large earth moving machinery.

In 1960 Hughie was transferred to Borumba Dam where his life would change forever. He met the "Local Office Girl" Dorothy (Dot) and married her later that same year. Hughie and Dot had their two children while working at Borumba. Both John, in 1961, and Aileen in 1963 were born at Gympie hospital.

After this Hughie and his family, like many others who worked for "the Firm", moved to a number of places around the state working on many large dams and in Irrigation Areas. These included Coolmunda, Atkinson, Julius, Ross River and Atkinson in the Lockyer Valley. Finally Hughie was sent to the Mackay area where he spent the rest of his working life, firstly at Kinchant Dam and in the Eton Irrigation Area and, last of all, finishing up on Teemburra Dam (the second last major dam built by "the Firm") from where he retired in 2000 after 46 years of continuous service.

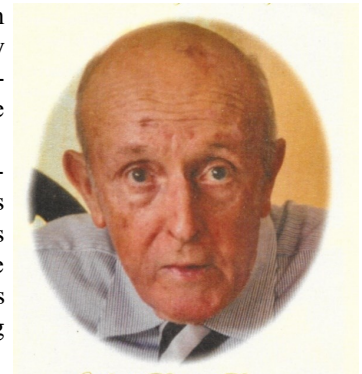
Hughie was first diagnosed with Parkinsons Disease in 1994 and it is this disease that was responsible for ending his life. The last twenty years had not been easy for him and he spent the last six and a half years in Good Shepherd Nursing Home in Mackay where the staff were wonderful to him. Dot has been very grateful for the care the home's staff had shown him.

In his younger years Hughie loved to play Rugby League and loved his Old Time Dancing. Once settling in the Mackay area, Hughie took up playing bowls at North Eton Lawn Bowls Club. He also joined the Pioneer Valley Lions Club and was very active in partaking of the Club's activities until the Club folded around about the time of his retirement. After he retired Hughie and Dot joined the Combined Probus Club and were also very active with this organisation until the progression of Parkinsons made it too difficult for him.

In his later years Hughie very much enjoyed seeing his grandchildren, and is sadly missed by them, his wife Dot and children John and Aileen.

**Rest in Peace – Hugh (Hughie) Byrnes.**

- Provided by the Byrnes Family (Dot Byrnes)



*The above tribute to Hughie was provided pkf Gary Luck. When I thanked Lucky for arranging it, I asked him how he was managing his recent retirement. His response follows - Ed.*

Retirement is good, in that both myself and the wife are fit and healthy, and I do not miss the type of work that the group had been doing for the last few years, but?

The wife and I had planned on doing a bit of travelling to catch up with old friends and some family members who have, over time, moved to different spots around the country and we were going to use these visits as a catalyst for doing some remote Australia travel we have been planning for some time. But like a lot of other people, COVID has curtailed our plans, and there is only sooooo much maintenance work etc you can do to the house before it starts getting ho hum, or spending big money for major work?

As for Hughie. It is sad, but also inevitable, to see the continued whittling down of the people who were intimately involved in the "heyday" of water resource development in Queensland, especially people like Hughie who was involved in so many areas. And for me especially close to home as Hughie bought the block of land and built his dream retirement house just across the road from me.

This is the first year we haven't gone to Hawaii because of Covid-19  
We usually don't go because we can't afford it!



## My Life of Hydrography Part 5

Ray Alford

When a station was serviced, the chart would be unceremoniously unrolled, often by holding the end and letting the roll drop to the floor, and then examined to see what record was captured. The worst result would be a straight line for the duration of the record, but more often than not, the record would be good to start with, become more intermittent, devolve into a series of “steps”, and then finish in a straight line. This type of record could be resurrected with a pencil and a little imagination to become a true record. If more imagination than science was needed to resurrect the trace, the record become “derived”. If no amount of imagination could produce a believable trace, then the record remained “missing”. No one liked a missing record as it would eventually need to be derived, a tedious and not too exact science. If, by some extraordinary stroke of good luck, the GE produced a flawless record, the party leader would declare that the instrument “had worked like a floatwell”, our gold standard of instrumentation.

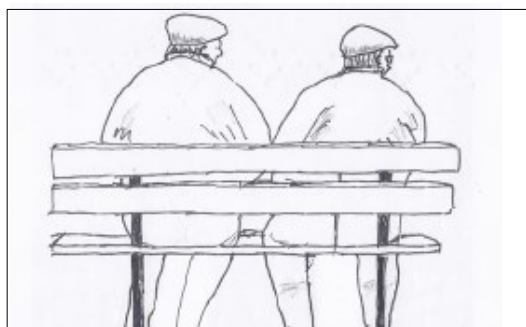
I decided early on that these GEs could be made to work as they sometimes did produce a good record. It should just be a matter of replacing the faulty parts and all would be right. All I needed was the knowledge to pinpoint the bit that needed replacement. There was a GE instrument at Blacks Creek that was particularly troublesome. The station was nearly new but had produced little worthwhile record. The hydrographic activities at Mackay at that time came under the jurisdiction of the Senior Hydrographer in Townsville, a man of great experience and knowledge. He would visit Mackay to discuss with Bill things of great hydrographic importance. Bill must have mentioned the problem with the Black’s Creek installation and he decided to visit the site and set things right. Here was my chance to learn the finer details of instrument servicing from an expert. The Senior Hydrographer was Roy Mincher, a cigar smoking, large, red faced Englishman who had worked with the department for about twenty years. (I later found out that his claim to fame was that he shared a flat with the hairdresser “Stefan” in Longreach when he worked there. No one actually believed him but he was eventually proved correct when Stefan approached him at JOJOs in Brisbane to discuss old times, a fact witnessed by several hydrographers.)

When Mincher confronted the troublesome instrument at Black’s Creek, he had me remove the “float” from the GE. The “float” was a switch that was suspended in the mercury U-tube. When the pressure in the system increased due to a river rise, the mercury would push on the float contacts which would, in turn, switch on the electric motor that drove the pen across

the chart. At the same time, the float would be winched upwards until the contacts opened, switching off the motor. Roy inspected the float contacts before taking a half smoked cigarette from his pocket, braking open the cigarette filter, and using the fibrous filter material to clean the contacts. He then declared the instrument fixed and had me reassemble the parts. I was truly amazed. I had previously used my shirt to clean the contacts so assumed that the cigarette filter had some miraculous cleaning properties that I was unaware of. Maybe I needed to take up smoking so that I would always have a ready supply of float cleaning material. My faith in Roy’s instrumentation fixing abilities was sorely tested on the next visit to the site when the GE showed exactly the same erratic behaviour as before.

It was many years later when I finally put together the pieces of the puzzle that solved the erratic behaviour of the GE’s. When they were originally designed and tested, the instrument was powered by four large 1462 dry cell batteries to give the 24 volts needed to drive the electric motor. This type of battery became unavailable during my first year on the job and they were replaced by four “Big Jim” 731 lantern batteries. These batteries had about one quarter the capacity of the earlier cells. The four batteries did not last, so, to overcome this problem, two banks of four cells were used, connected in series. The problem now was that if one of the banks was at a lower voltage, power from the higher voltage bank would flow to the lower voltage causing all eight batteries to go flat. To stop this happening, a diode was placed between each bank and the common positive voltage. Diodes only allow electricity to flow in one direction so the differential voltage problem was eliminated at the cost of nearly a volt lost across the diode. The end result of all this was to have a power source that had less capacity and a lower voltage than the original design. The instrumentation often operated in conditions of dust and high humidity.

*Continued next page ...*



*“My daughter recommended a TV programme she thought I’d enjoy. Within five minutes I couldn’t remember the title. So she reminded me. It was ‘Unforgotten’.”*

My friend just hired a limo for \$1000 but it didn’t come with a driver.  
Imagine spending all that money with nothing to chauffeur it.

## My Life of Hydrography (continued)

The dampness would cause residual current loss, which, on top of the high current needed by the motor would drain the batteries. Low voltage would manifest itself in strange ways. There was a circuit card with the task of switching the low current from the float to the higher current necessary for the motor. If the voltage wasn't high enough to switch the current cleanly, the motor would either not turn on, or worse still, not turn off. The float would then be winched upwards, through the entire range of the instrument, until a limit switch was triggered, shutting down the system. The same could happen in the reverse direction, dunking the float in the mercury and triggering the lower limit switch. When the station was next visited, it was never obvious what had caused the problem. Often the voltage of batteries tested OK, so either the float, circuit card or motor were blamed and often needlessly replaced. Because the batteries were not tested under load and would appear good on our primitive battery testers, they were frequently not replaced as often as they should have. Had we known the true cause of these failures, the solution would have been to change all the batteries every visit. It was only when reliable solar cells and rechargeable batteries became readily available that the reliability of the GE's greatly improved.

Bill Sticklan much preferred to camp than stay in hotels while on a field trip. Camping allowed Bill to start work early and finish late but I think that it also reminded him of the good times when he was in the army. There was no refrigeration so we ate canned food when we camped. Bill's favourite camp food was BS&O (braised steak and onions) which became the staple of our evening meals. He would boil up some potatoes to go with the meal and then serve up the leftover "potato water" as a drink. Lunch was always cans of tinned fruit, either peaches or pears. The meals seldom varied all the times that I camped with Bill and it was not until many years after I left Mackay before I touched BS&O or canned fruit again. Bill didn't take much camping equipment on the trip. Geoff and I were both given a sleeping bag, a Qld Govt branded blanket and a square of canvas that was formerly a cablecar cover. The blanket and sleeping bag were rolled in the canvas to become our swag. When we camped for the night, the swags were simply rolled out on the ground to become our beds. Bill would light a fire to boil the billy and warm the BS&O to be served on enamel plates. I'm not sure if the Commission would have supplied a tent or stretcher if we requested them, but Bill wouldn't have wanted them anyway. His philosophy was that the less gear you had, the quicker it was to pack and unpack. If it rained during the night, you could either try to keep dry under the canvas cover or drag the whole swag under the vehicle. Either way, you generally ended up wet in the morning.

We would often camp in the ranges behind the Eungella range where the temperatures could get quite low. In fact, Eungella is one of the few places in North Queensland to have recorded snow. We were camped there one time and the morning was very cold. Neither Geoff nor I ventured from our swags while we waited for Bill to get to fire going. As was Bill's custom, he banged the billies together to make sure we were awake. I can still remember the sound of the ice cracking as I bent back the canvas cover.

Camping could also be good at times. My favourite was the trip we did to service the stations on the Broken River. The place was very remote and the track there was rough. Bill's Landcruiser was an early three speed model with no synchromesh on first gear which required a high level of skill to drive smoothly. The gullies were steep and required frequent double-declutching to get back into first gear and up the other side. If momentum was lost you could either try again or winch yourself up. This was certainly a place to fine tune the art of four-wheel driving. Because of the remoteness of the area, it was seldom visited, and as a consequence, the fishing was great. You could almost always be assured of catching a black bream for breakfast which certainly tasted better than the BS&O. Gauging the river was always done with caution as Bill had previously sighted crocodiles in some of the big waterholes. For the same reason, we never camped too close to the water's edge along the Broken River. I never saw a crocodile in the times I was there but did see a few slides as proof of their presence.

The Mackay district had two new gauging stations that had been built just prior to my arrival. The stations were erected by a construction gang stationed at Rockhampton and each, because of the importance of the site, was equipped with a cableway. Cableways were a construction challenge as large footings needed to be dug requiring equally large amounts of concrete to fill them. The sites were often remote necessitating most of the work to be carried out by hand. Additionally, the river banks and bed upstream and downstream of the cableway had to be cleared of large trees and scrub to allow an unimpeded section for the gauging. My admiration of the work done by these construction crews grew in time as I visited some of the remote sites that they had built and also as the construction activity passed to the hydrographers as the construction gangs disbanded.

.... *To be continued.. I'm really enjoying these adventures. Many thanks, Ray - Ed.*

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

1. (ii) 1939. 2. (ii) Yasser Arafat. 3. (v) Bubbles. 4. (iii) Big Toe 5. (iii) nibbling on women's earlobes. 6. (ii) Perth. 7. (iii) excessive buttocks tissue. 8. (i) 1909. 9. (ii) Parkes. 10. (i) Nomophobia.

You Matter.

Unless you multiply yourself by the speed of light squared. Then, you Energy.

# Memories of Leslie Dam

## Part 3

### Hector Macdonald

One of the workmen in camp was Les Warren, a plant operator, who spent most of his time driving a mobile crane. Les was 35 years of age and had been in the Navy in World War II. He had a girlfriend, Dell, in Brisbane whom he was keen to see on weekends, and as he had a car, this is where he went. I asked if I could get a lift with him and he agreed. And so every weekend, with only one or two exceptions, I set off at 5 every Friday afternoon with Les to go to Brisbane. He was a good friend to me for the whole of my stay at Leslie Dam and I appreciated the help he gave me over that time. Soon after we started travelling he bought a new car, a cream Volkswagen and this provided excellent transport. Each trip to Brisbane I gave him £1 to cover petrol costs. Les dropped me in the Valley in Ann Street around 7 after coming over the Story Bridge and from there I would get a cab home. On Sunday afternoons I would meet him around 5 at the same place for the trip back.

A couple of months after I had been travelling down and back with Les we were joined by John Meredith, an owner-driver of a large truck who worked on contract for the Commission at the dam site. He was also around 30, single, and his girlfriend was the secretary to Fred Haigh, the Commissioner. So he too had a good reason to come to Brisbane on weekends.

The trips on Friday nights were always uneventful, as everybody was looking forward to coming home for the weekend. However trips back on Sunday night were not so straightforward as nobody was in a hurry to return to start another week's work at the dam. Quite often on the way we would take a detour through Peak Crossing near Boonah. In those days no hotels opened on Sundays, except for a few in the bush which could open for a two-hour session from 4 to 6 in the afternoon to cater for bona fide travellers. Les, John and I made full use of the opportunity at the Peak Crossing Hotel. If the publican decided to stay open well after 6 (he never closed before 7) we would stay on. Otherwise we would buy a carton of bottles when he closed. My job for the rest of the trip was to sit in the back seat and serve the beer both for the driver, Les, and John who was also in the front. We did not bother with glasses. When I opened a bottle I drank about one-third and passed it to Les. He drank his share and passed it to John who finished the bottle, and then had the job of throwing the bottle out of the window. We always drove carefully and slowly and by the time we reached Leslie Dam around midnight we had usually drunk nine or ten bottles. Needless to say there were frequent stops along the road to ease the stress of the journey. Occasionally if we were feeling particularly sociable we would not take the dirt road turn-off to Leslie Dam which led from the Warwick-Inglewood road, but would continue on for another five miles or so

until we came to the Darling Downs Hotel which was run by a man named Cosgrove, and whose young son worked in the store out at the dam. If the bar was not still going when we arrived, Cosgrove would oblige and open it up for us. We would then discuss affairs of state and sing songs until the early hours of the morning.

On one Thursday night, after the canteen had closed, a group of us were having a party in one of the huts in the single men's lines. It had been raining heavily for a few days and the creek was rising. While we were at the party it started to pour down. The latest forecast was for more heavy rain on the Friday and this would surely mean that the access road across the creek at the damsite which led on to Warwick would not be open. There was a high level footbridge above flood level in the creek and a few people had parked their cars on the opposite bank during the day so that they could still get out on Friday night, even if the creek did flood. However Les Warren had left his car back at camp. When it started to teem I asked Les about his car. He said he wasn't going out in the rain and if the creek flooded that was just too bad. I offered to shift his car for him. He gave me the keys. About half an hour later I returned drenched, having walked a mile or so in pitch blackness through heavy rain from the creek. When Les saw how saturated I looked he realised I had a special reason for wanting to go home for the weekend. He looked at me and said, "Hector, she must be a bloody beauty!" She was.

There was one Friday night, (28 September 1962 in fact), that Les dropped me in Ann Street and I caught a taxi home to Morris Street. I had been in the cab only a few minutes when I saw a huge glow on the horizon. I told the taxi driver it must be a fire. He was interested in this event because our trip to Paddington was taking us in the direction of the fire. He managed to call up his base on his two-way radio and they told him where the fire was – it was the Paddington Tramsheds. "The Paddington Tramsheds – hell, that's where I live mate!"

We travelled via the Normanby and Musgrave Road. By the time we got to the corner of Enoggera Terrace and Kennedy Terrace the traffic was starting to clog up. I got out in Kennedy Terrace and walked down to the corner of Morris Street carrying my weekend bag with its collection of dirty washing. There was a policeman at the top of my street stopping all traffic from entering. I told him I lived in the street and he let me through. As I walked towards home I saw a sight that no school boy had ever dreamed of. Here was the huge complex of the Paddington Tram Sheds on fire. It was almost entirely a timber structure. The stumps at the back must have been 50 feet high. It was about 60 yards long and 30 yards wide. I had explored and played underneath it since the late 1940s. All of the lanes between trams and the pits underneath them were covered in grease from constant servicing. Once it started to burn nothing could stop it.

*Continued next page ...*

I dream of the day when I will walk down the aisle and hear those magical words....

'This is your pilot speaking.'



## Memories of Leslie Dam (continued)

When I got home no one was there. My father had not returned from work and Clare had gone out. I immediately went up to Latrobe Terrace at the other end of Morris Street and joined the crowd from all over town who had come to watch Brisbane's biggest fire yet – and right in my street too! By midnight the spectacle was mostly over but it was an event to remember. I had seen three inch diameter canvas hoses, carrying a full flow of water, catch fire and burn when a burning piece of timber fell on them. I had also seen a stream of water from a fire hose so strong that it needed two firemen to control it, turn to steam from the heat before it ever reached the flames it was supposed to extinguish. Eventually the crowd thinned out and I too went home to bed. I had no trouble sleeping but around 3 am I was wakened by an almighty roar and cracking. I sprang out of bed and rushed to the front window of the verandah where I slept. The rear end of the shed was collapsing. Trams were falling about sixty feet from their normal parking areas down through the burning timbers to the ground below. The fireworks from the erupting embers of the timber were unbelievable. We were lucky – our house was out of range of the burning sparks flying through the air. People on the opposite side of Morris Street and also those in Warmington Street (the sheds covered almost the whole of the width of the block from Warmington Street to Morris Street) had been evacuated from their homes. The fire heralded the end of an era for Brisbane. Over the following years trams were phased out and Brisbane lost part of its history and character.

There were two occasions on which I spent the weekend at Leslie Dam. One was to attend the Leslie Dam dance, an event sponsored by the social club at the dam and which I helped to organise. As I ran the drawing office at the dam I had the job of designing and producing suitable posters to be displayed at key locations in Warwick. I also had to get a band, a public address system, lighting and so on. The venue was the men's mess.

One day early in my time at Leslie, Taylor told me to organise the painting of the mess. This seemed an excellent idea to me as the walls were brown-coloured masonite. This, combined with a bare wooden floor and no ceiling below the roof line, provided drab conditions for meal time. I took Mick Farrell into the mess – he never ate there as he had a married quarter – and told him to get it painted. "What, all of it?" he queried.

"Of course," I said. "Why would you just paint half of it?" Mick did not say any more but I know now that he knew there was something not quite right about my instructions. And so the interior of the men's mess was painted pastel blue. As might be expected it trans-

formed the place. The cooks were happy, the kitchen staff were happy, the people who ate there were happy. But there was one man who was not happy – Alan Richard Taylor. He asked me why I had painted the men's mess as well as the small section of the staff mess. I told Taylor I had painted the mess because he had told me to paint the mess, and that if he had wanted only the staff mess painted (which I later found out had been the practice at Tinaroo and at Moogerah) he should have said so. I was right and Taylor knew it. Contrary to his army background, he had not given clear, unambiguous orders. Taylor copped it on the chin and said nothing. But I think he noted the incident in his black book with a view to getting square. Taylor explained to visiting senior officers (Learmonth and Hiley) that the reason the mess was painted was because I stuffed up. Subsequently Hiley told me that my idea to paint the mess was a good one and in future it would continue to be painted. I passed this message around the camp and became a mini hero – a champion of the rights of the working man. And it was the painting of the mess and the creation of a room that was bright and pleasant that led to the decision to hold a dance there – hence the Leslie Dam dance night which the social club was busy organising.

Before pressing on with the story of the dance it is necessary to mention the important part which the game of golf played in the lives of the citizens of the township. Taylor played golf and so others tended to play golf too. Apart from horse racing, there was more interest in golf than any other sport. Those who played joined the Warwick Golf Club. I was talked into taking up the game and the contractor who ran the mess, Bob Hastie, arranged to get me a set of clubs, bag and buggy. They cost £46. I joined the club. When Taylor's wife Phyl found out that I had bought a set of clubs she organised to take me in for a game. She was the boss in the Taylor household so Taylor had the honour of taking Phyl, Mick Farrell and me in his grey Zephyr Mark II into the Club one Saturday morning for a social foursome.

*But, dear reader, you will have to wait to the next edition to learn about how Hector played a round - Ed.*



### St Barnabas Bulletin Board

At this month's Grief Counselling, Mary Hunter will talk about her husband who was tragically killed in an interview with the vicar

My family was really poor.

On my 10th birthday they put half a cake with five candles up against a mirror!

# HEALTH *and beauty*

## Sausage Poison in Your Face

In the early 19th century, a German doctor, Julius Kerner, identified a new disease that killed some of his patients. The disease gradually paralysed every part of the body, finally causing death. Kerner realised all the patients had been eating cheap sausages with bad meat. Now the Latin for sausage was *botulus* so he named the disease *botulism* or *sausage disease* and he called the poison *botulism toxin*.

In 1895 three attendees at a funeral in Belgium dropped dead from eating bad meat. The remaining meat was rushed to the University of Ghent where the bacteria, appropriately sausage shaped, were identified and named *clostridium botulinum*.

This meant that *botulism toxin* could now be manufactured. A poison!? Paralysis can be a good thing. For example, facial spasms can be controlled by a tiny injection of the toxin. Very soon people realised that if you paralysed somebody's face, it made her look younger. If it made her look a little odd and incapable of showing emotion, what did it matter? She looked younger.

Suddenly sausage poison became the toast of Hollywood. Of course it's not called sausage poison. It's not even called *botulism toxin* because everyone knows toxins are bad for you. Now that *botulism toxin* has become chic it's changed its name to *botox*.



## Exercise those Brain Cells

Q. On Wednesday 2 February 2000, a global event occurred that had not taken place since 28 August AD 888. What was significant about this later date?



## Keeping Sun-Safe

Norman Lindsay 1879-1969  
From *Lindsay in America*



*When you're out in the sun, it's essential that you wear a hat!*

## An Unforeseen Outcome

Have we overdone slip, slop and slap?  
It's quite disconcerting to see the statistics now coming on tap all show, as a Nation, now we have created an unforeseen gap: we're deficient in vitamin D.

## The 'Unprecedented' Pandemic

This current pandemic may be disastrous, catastrophic, calamitous or tragic, but unprecedented it is not.

The Black Death of the 14th century killed 40% of the population of Europe. (The acute shortage of labour then resulted in the Feudal System coming to unlamented end.)

The 17th century plague caused swathes of deaths in England.

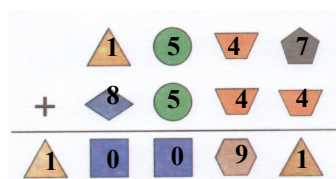
The 19th century Irish Potato Famine killed or dispossessed millions.

The Spanish Flu of a century ago killed more people than the Great War.

In 1592, all the theatres in London were closed because of the plague, and remained so for three years (As a thespian, I can but feel for the players. Shakespeare, unable to stage plays, pandered his muse by writing his sonnets.)

The only thing 'unprecedented' about the current pandemic appears to be the unprecedented use of that word.

## Answer to last Issue's Teaser



Remember when Botox was a taboo subject?  
Now you mention it and nobody raises an eyebrow.

## The Silo Tour

In October when, not only were we allowed to travel within the State but were encouraged to do so, Helen and I persuaded close friends to join us on a short tour. Our objective was to see a number of decorated silos that had been featured on television and in the press. The friends took their caravan and we stayed in cabins in the same caravan parks.

Our route took us through Murgon, Gayndah, Monto, Biloela, Rolleston, St George and Goondiwindi where I had been a number of times in the course of my former work life, so I had an added bonus of nostalgia and Helen learned more about my exploits.

There was far more street art to see than we were aware of. For example, in Monto we ducked into the Duck Inn to buy a sandwich for lunch and the old lady behind the counter pointed us in the direction of the wonderfully decorated side street and water tower.



Left: Water Tower at Monto



Right: Three Moons outside Monto



The panorama near Yelarbon

All these things of beauty are listed and are certainly worth seeing. We found the most wonderful examples of various sorts in Monto, Biloela, Moura, St George, Goondiwindi, Thallon, Yelarbon and Nobby. We can only admire the work and fortitude of these artists up in the air for months.

We finished off our tour enjoying the quaint and amusing decorated hay bales at Kalbar.

A thoroughly pleasant trip!

**Ian Pullar**

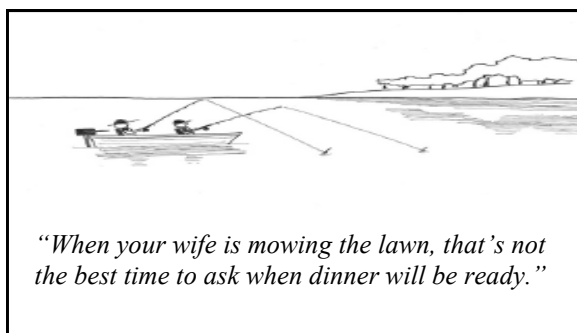
### A Sign of the Times

On one end of the urinal in the RAMS at the Nindigully pub

**EXPRESS LANE  
FIVE BEERS OR LESS.**

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

1. 'The wheels on the bus' was published in: (i) 1929; (ii) 1939; (iii) 1949; (iv) 1959.
2. The 1994 Nobel Peace prize was awarded to Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres and: (i) Jimmy Carter; (ii) Yasser Arafat; (iii) Donald Trump; (iv) Moshe Dayan; (v) Golda Meir; (vi) Bill Clinton; (vii) George H Bush.
3. Michael Jackson's pet chimpanzee was named: (i) Thriller; (ii) Bad; (iii) Dangerous; (iv) Off the Wall; C; (vii) Rhinoplasty; (viii) Billie Jean.
4. Where on the body would you find the hallux. The: (i) Tongue; (ii) Eyebrow; (iii) Big Toe; (iv) Elbow; (v) Knee.
5. A Gynotikolobomassophile is someone who likes: (i) holding hands; (ii) sleeping in; (iii) nibbling on women's earlobes; (iv) being fed; (v) chewing someone else's nails; (vi) being tattooed.
6. Edith Cowan University is in: (i) Adelaide; (ii) Perth; (iii) Wagga; (iv) Darwin.
7. Steatopygia is having: (i) joined eyebrows; (ii) water on the knee; (iii) excessive buttocks tissue; (iv) tunnel vision; (v) an urge to scratch.
8. The old age pension commenced in: (i) 1909; (ii) 1919; (iii) 1929; (iv) 1939.
9. Which NSW Town hosts an annual Elvis festival : (i) Tamworth; (ii) Parkes; (iii) Cootamundra; (iv) Inverell; (v) Glen Innes; (vi) Junee; (vii) Dubbo.
10. The irrational fear of your mobile phone not working is: (i) Nomophobia; (ii) Philomaphobia; (iii) Phonophobia; (iv) Acrophobia; (v) Somniphobia.



*"When your wife is mowing the lawn, that's not the best time to ask when dinner will be ready."*

We just got a boxer dog.  
Every time the door bell rings he goes and sits in a corner.



## Book Club

I am particularly fond of well-written books that skilfully dovetail a fiction story with actual historical events and people. Two such books in particular, have taken my fancy over recent times.

*The Dictionary of Lost Words* by Meg Williams is set in and around the scriptorium where James Murray and his team were compiling the first Oxford Dictionary. Harry Nichol is a lexicographer who, because he is a widower, has to take his young daughter Esme to work with him where she sits under his desk in the “scrippy”. His task is to process the slips of paper on which readers have submitted words they have found for consideration. One day a slip floats down to Esme with the word “bondmaid.” It doesn’t make the cut, but Esme saves it. Over the years she collects more and more words which she stores in a trunk owned by Lizzie, a servant of the Murray household who can neither read nor write, but loves her “Essie May”.

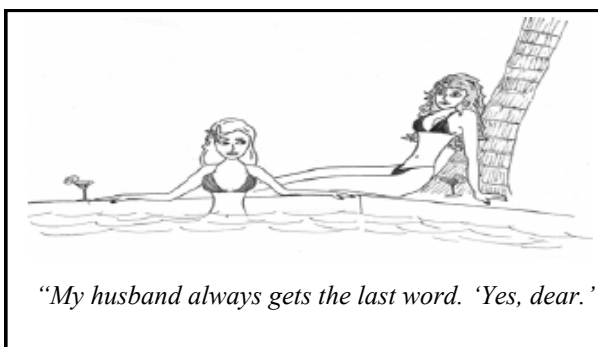
Esme realise that “not all words have the same value” and that common words, particularly those of special relevance to women, do not find a home in the Oxford Dictionary. But Esme collects them.

This is the period during which the suffragettes were particularly active and Esme is inevitably involved.

In time she joins the team of lexicographers and is there when the Oxford Dictionary is finally published in 1928, nearly 60 years after work began and after Murray’s death. Esme’s words are not published there.

A wonderfully sensitive book, beautifully written with a particularly moving end.

**Ian Pullar**



American Kate Quinn is the author of *The Alice Network*, a wonderful example of historical fiction.

Immediately after World War II, twenty year old Charlie St Clair is determined to find her cousin Rose who was stranded in occupied France. She has found the name of an English woman, Eve, who may be able to give her clues as to the whereabouts of Rose’s last known address.

Eve Gardiner was recruited as a spy during World War I and was planted in a restaurant frequented by German officers where she pretended she was French and could not speak German, but could overhear and pass on important information through her controller, code-named Alice but who went by numerous other names in various roles. “Alice” was a real life person, Louise de Bettignies, who ran a highly successful spy network until she was caught and died of typhoid in a German prison.

The novel alternates chapters CHARLIE (told in the first person) and EVE (third person) to reveal events of two different eras.

As one review says, “A ring of daring female spies known as the Alice Network left a legacy of blood and betrayal. Two women suffering the losses of two different wars must join forces, one to find her voice and her redemption, the other to face her fears and her boldest enemy. Kate Quinn strums the chords of human emotion with two story lines that race over continents and through decades to converge in one explosive ending.”

Recommended.

**Ian Pullar**

Has anybody else seen the recently released film *The Dry* which is a very good adaptation of the first of Jane Harper’s very good crime novels? I’m always intrigued by the skill needed to turn what would take more than ten hours to read aloud (in a talking book) into a work that lasts perhaps two hours, including visuals. The two mediums are certainly different!

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