Watery Sauces Oldies and Boldies

Newsletter No 95 **July 2021**

NEWSLETTER OF THE WATER RESOURCES RETIREES ASSOCIATION

The AGM that got away

The date of 6 July had been announced for the Annual General Meeting to be followed by a mid-year luncheon at COTAH. Negotiations had been held with the COTAH manager to provide lunch for a minimum of 35 patrons and the space for the AGM or for refreshments for those only attending the luncheon. The numbers and the payments had come in and we were all set to go. AND THEN …

The Premier announced a three day lock down (with the possibility of an extension) in response to the discovery of a number of Covid-19 cases in the community, and particularly the Delta variant as it had been labelled. The Committee had no option but to cancel the event, much to the relief of the COTAH manager who would otherwise have had to order in the food for lunch with no guarantee that it would be used.

This was a most unfortunate development, but with the continuation of the pandemic, not entirely unexpected. Perhaps as more of the population become vaccinated, life will become more certain.

The AGM will have to be rescheduled to a date and venue to be determined. Playing the "glad game", at least as all the members of the outgoing Committee had nominated for the scheduled election, there is no great hardship for them to continue to serve until we manage to hold an AGM.

Members receiving this edition of the Newsletter by snail mail will realise that the Committee has met to undertake the customary mail-out. The Committee will also attempt to map out a future programme of activities against an uncertain future, which we trust will become more predictable before too long.

Patronage

Glenn Stockton, the CEO of SunWater and our Patron, had accepted our invitation to the luncheon, so we missed the opportunity to meet him.

To date, patronage by the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water has not been arranged. Linda Dobe, who heads up the Water part of the portfolio has been absent on sick leave for some time, but will return to duty soon. We wish her well and a full recovery.

From the Editor's Chair

We members who live in the great south-east are very conscious of the tyranny of distance which makes it difficult to keep in touch with distant former colleagues. President Daryl has been doing a ring-around of country members to ensure that we have up to date contact details and to remind them of the proposed celebrations of next year.

He reports that members view the newsletter as "the life blood of the association" and they look forward to receiving each edition. Of course the newsletter is also a vehicle for them to pass on their news or stories. We'd all love to hear them . .Until next time, au reservoir.

Ian Pullar, Editor

Marking a Milestone, 100 Years On

The centenary of the passing of the *Irrigation Act of 1922* is seen as a great opportunity to celebrate a significant milestone and to renew acquaintances with former colleagues. Our sub-committee, chaired by Bruce Pearce is continuing to formulate plans which are likely to include events in a number of centres late next year.

Bruce would be more than happy to talk to any of our colleagues to share the committees and their ideas about appropriate celebrations. He can be contacted by phone on (07) 3289 6297 or at brucepearce@bigpond.com

It would be very helpful too if our members spread the word among those former colleagues who are not members but who could be interested in reunions.

At the bottoms of pages are re-worked proverbs for our times.

Dam and Weir Construction in 2021

On 29 April, WRRA held a gathering at which the speaker was David Murray, Chief Engineer, Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water. A summary of his address follows - **Ed.**

In the first of our seminars in over a year we were pleased to welcome Dave Murray to speak on new developments in the Queensland Government. Dave spoke of his role in the new department to provide strategic and detailed technical advice on dam, weir and pipeline projects, to help manage risks associated with water projects given the recent history of structural failure of several water related projects due to design and construction flaws between 2000 and 2015.

Dave said that reasons for failures included a lack of understanding of the risks associated with owning and operating bulk water infrastructure and little understanding of risk management which led to poor scoping and selection of consultancies, inappropriate delivery models, lack of weir design expertise and dam design experience not necessarily translating to weir design.

On the subject of dams, Dave noted that only two had been constructed in Queensland since 2000 – Wyaralong and Paradise and while he chose not to expand on the failures at Paradise, it had become obvious that change was necessary for the successful delivery of water infrastructure in Queensland.

Dave then proceeded to provide some insight into several options currently being discussed, and which hopefully will enable Queensland to better manage the delivery and operation of major water infrastructure in future.

These included the possible re-establishment of a state water authority given the current round of business cases for water projects showed the importance of providing continuity and expertise in the ownership and management of these long-life projects. The lack of expertise in supervision of consultancies also created problems in the delivery of these projects.

Another issue raised by Dave was the need to re-establish the development of engineers and allied fields in the design and delivery of water related projects including training programs. As evidenced in the 70s and 80s, this had provided the basis for agencies and consultancies to develop graduates competent in the delivery of water projects and there was a need for this type of program in Queensland for the future given the projected impacts of a drying climate.

Dave then gave a snapshot of our latest project – Rookwood Weir on the Fitzroy River upstream of Rockhampton, the size and complexity of the project such that a lot of planning has had to go into the design and establishment of the project.

Enabling works have included the upgrading of the 16.2km access road, a new major intersection on the Capricorn Highway, a 21m high, 260m long bridge at Riverslea and replacement of the bridge approaches.

Rookwood Weir will have a capacity of 74,325 ML, a yield of 86,000 ML and an impoundment length of 60km. Spillway width is 202m, height above riverbed is 16.2m and total length of the structure is 350m.

Some of the major challenges with the project include the stabilisation of the bed and banks (as for most weirs) and sourcing materials for the concrete required for this large structure.

Following several questions from the floor on the future look of water development in Queensland, our President, Daryl Brigden, moved a vote of thanks which was unreservedly supported by acclamation given that at last there appears to be some recognition by Government that water projects deserved to be better delivered in this state.

Past President Pete

Many thanks to Dave for his address and to Peter Gilbey for his summary. I'm sorry I was unable to join the 15 members who attended the talk - **Ed.**

A Well Deserved Award

Congratulations to former General Manager of Resilience, Graeme Milligan, who shared the 2021 Floodplain Management Australia (FMA) Allan Ezzy Flood Risk Manager of the Year Award.

From 2011 to his retirement in 2020, Graeme led a series of projects to strengthen the flood resilience of Queensland communities. He also led the delivery of Resilient Queensland, the implementation plan for the Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience.

He who laughs last …
… doesn't get the joke.

Exploring the Bradfield Scheme

I recently received a phone call from Bob McDonald offering me an article for the Newsletter and this was followed by the article which commenced as follows:

INTRODUCTION

Over the last twelve months, Covid has put a lid on a lot of activities. So, to keep the brain active, I decided to explore Bradfield's proposal to transport water from east flowing streams into the proposed Hells Gate Dam (HGD) on the Burdekin and across the Great Dividing Range (GDR) to the Thomson catchment. This activity was further advanced by the proposal for a 'New Bradfield Scheme' during the 2020 election campaign.

There follows a detailed description of Bob's extremely interesting and commendable research. First, Bob had to define what was meant by "The Bradfield Scheme". In 1938, Bradfield proposed moving water from the upper reaches of the Clarke River within the HG Dam storage area, through a tunnel under the GDR to the Flinders River. In 1941 he proposed an alternative pipeline system from HG Dam, via somewhere between Charters Towers and Pentland, and then on to Webb Lake where he had been told there was a low spot in the GDR and that water could then flow into Torrens Creek, a tributary of the Thomson, and on to Cooper Creek and Lake Eyre. The LNP's election proposal was to irrigate 80,000 km^2 of land west of the GDR.

Bob's work involved the acquisition of detailed contour information and an examination of many of the proposed components of the 'original' and 'new' Bradfield Schemes.

I am sure that many of our readers would find Bob's work of great interest, so, with his permission, we have posted his article on our website. It can be accessed via the following link. *Bradfield Schemes.*

As a result of his research, Bob has concluded

MYTHS TO DISPEL

Some information on the internet about the Bradfield scheme appears to be straight out of a Jules Verne novel and needs to be 'fact checked' properly.

1. TUNNEL. There is no economical method of constructing a tunnel of any size under the GDR. It is too long and a HGL slope must be considered in any calculations.
2. CLARKE RIVER. Taking water from the upper reaches of the Clarke allows only a small percentage of storage volume to be accessed. This method also prevents the use of hydro from HG dam.
3. WARREGO RIVER. Without pumping, there is no way of distributing water from the Thomson catchment to the Warrego, let alone the Maranoa.

CONCLUSION

Water distribution from east to west by any method is an expensive exercise. An organised irrigation area on the alluvial black soil between Hughenden and Richmond would certainly inject a lot into that area, but Governments need to provide the funding and not expect irrigators to pay for everything.

I commend Bob's work to all interested readers - **Ed.**

Bob McDonald spent his working life on Irrigation Area design in Mareeba, Emerald and Mackay before becoming Principal Technical Officer, Design Division in Brisbane and then Executive Office Program Management, Water Resources.

Regretfully, we have to record the passing of a number of our former colleagues who would have been known to our members:

Patrick Hall Scott (1935 - 2021) died on 14 March. Pat joined IWSC as a cadet Draftsman in the 1950s and served until his retirement in 1989. He managed the cartographic unit in William Street until he moved to the Indooroopilly Science Centre when that was established.

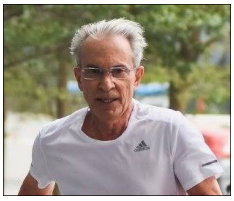
Laurence James Brace (1930 - 2021) passed away in April. Laurie was a Mechanical Engineer, based in Head Office.

Donald Alan Collyer, who died in Yeppoon in May was a construction foreman who worked on Beardmore, Monduran, Kinchant and Fairbairn dams before becoming a "water joey" in the Theodore Irrigation Area.

Christopher Mols (1961 - 2021) died in May, shortly before his 60th birthday. Chris joined the materials group at Rocklea as a cadet in 1979 and worked there (apart from a deployment in Cambodia) until he resigned in 1998 to take up a post with Hymix and Hanson.

People who live in glass houses …
… should ablute elsewhere.

A Review of Risk



Ian Fox

Ian joined QIWSC in 1970 and worked in HQ (Planning and Design), Construction (Maroon Dam) and Emerald Irrigation Scheme up to September 1976. See also page 5 **-Ed.**

During the years I worked in Asia and other parts of the developing world (beginning in 1976 on a project in Iraq and continuing through to 2020 when I did my last assignment in Vietnam), I rarely worried about personal risks due to natural disasters. Events such as floods, landslides, earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions etc. nevertheless occurred with high frequency when I was in Indonesia, the Philippines, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Vietnam, Cambodia, China... I was more worried about being killed in road accidents given that driving habits in all of those countries were uniformly reckless.

One becomes accustomed to being woken up by the vigorous shaking of a house during earthquake tremors, and I have experienced some impressive floods. But I have never been seriously inconvenienced by any of these phenomena which incidentally played a large role in my work activities. One of my most interesting assignments was damage assessment (to infrastructure and community/livelihood activities) resulting from extensive flooding in the Songhua river basin in China in 1998. This is the worst flood on record for this river basin. It covered large parts of Jilin, Inner Mongolia and Hilongjiang provinces, all close to or bordering Russia's far east.

This was my first assignment in China - my projects in Indonesia had been interrupted brutally by the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis. I arrived in China toward the end of 1998 before the floodwaters had receded. Field investigations were relatively straightforward - we were able to drive for hundreds of kilometres in different directions on frozen floodwater. It was quite spectacular and much safer than driving on the iced-over roads. However, one of my team members fell through the ice at one location because he walked close to a bridge abutment where water flowing under the ice had eroded its underside. He had a miserable trip back to civilization, wrapped as much as possible in a tarpaulin.

A broken bridge in Inner Mongolia (this is the only photo I could find on my computer from that investigation)

The nearest I came to being a natural disaster victim was when I visited the island of Flores in Indonesia in 1992. A Dutch consultant (Wijnand Langeraar) and I had been assigned to prepare a technical proposal for irrigation infrastructure modernisation. We arrived in the capital Maumere on the evening of 11 December 1992, and set off early the next day to visit various sites between Maumere and Labuan Bajo on the western extremity of the island. Flores is a stunningly beautiful island, but its roads are (or were at that date) rudimentary and badly potholed. Many sections of road were being rebuilt to higher standards, with road building crews housed in camps precariously perched on hillsides adjacent to work sites. The island is a string of volcanoes.

During our first day of road travel we experienced some unusual shaking of the vehicle. This shaking became so vigorous that the driver stopped to check the wheels and other equipment. There did not seem to be anything amiss, and given that the roads were in a primitive condition, we were not unduly alarmed by the roughness of the ride. At the next town a large crowd (most if not all of the town's residents) was standing out in the road. We learned then that there had been a particularly strong earthquake and the town's residents were now too afraid to remain in their houses or other buildings. Since we had some distance to cover before arriving at the next major town (Ruteng), we continued on.

We could not advance beyond Ruteng because many roads had become impassable so we settled in for a stay of unknown duration. The earthquake had knocked out power for much of the island. Many bridges had collapsed and there had been massive landslides on steep mountain sides. In Ruteng we learned through our driver that Maumere had been severely affected by the earthquake and a resulting tsunami which reached as high as 25m. (Quoting from Wikipedia: the earthquake had a magnitude of 7.8 and produced a tsunami that killed some 2,500 people. In Maumere where we had spent the night, 90% of buildings were destroyed).

The driver of our hire car left us in Ruteng because he was anxious to return to his family in Maumere. We had no way of contacting our families or others to inform them we were safe, so we took local buses to Labuan Bajo (at the western extremity of Flores) in the hope of catching a flight or a boat to return home. However, all flights had been diverted to rescue and humanitarian services and the passenger ferries were booked out. (Bus travel on country roads in Indonesia has a particular feature that adds to the experience: the sides of the bus become streaked with vomit, the odour of which is enough to turn the stomach of the most intrepid travellers. Occasionally the vomit is hosed off at various points along the route).

All work and no play …
… is the suspected adulterer's claim.

A Review of Risk (continued)

We settled into some comfortable accommodation and attempted to prepare our report on the few sites we had already visited. Labuan Bajo is stunningly beautiful and our simple accommodation overlooked a particularly attractive set of islands and beaches. We did some fieldwork not far out of Labuan Bajo. We also joined some groups of tourists for snorkeling.

Killing time in Lubuan Bajo

Everyone was trapped, more or less, in the same predicament - no available flights or space on heavily booked passenger boats.

Eventually, after about 12 days we were able to reserve two seats on a Merpati flight to West Nusa Tenggara, where we hoped to pick up flights heading further west. When we turned up at the airport we were informed that the flight was overbooked and that we could not join this flight. No amount of disputation (on the part of my Dutch colleague) could convince the airport staff to allow us onto that flight. Coincidentally we also missed out on a boat ride the same day because we had chosen the flight over the boat ride, and relinquished our boat reservation. We watched the plane take off. It veered to the left, the wing tip hit the ground beside the runway and the plane crashed. Many passengers were injured, some quite badly.

The passenger boat (for which we had relinquished our tickets) returned to Labuan Bajo with all passengers onboard. The boat had become caught in a massive whirlpool (not far from Komodo island - the home of the famous dragons), which created panic among the passengers. The captain and his crew succeeded in exiting the whirlpool after many harrowing minutes, but decided not to attempt the voyage that day and returned to Labuan Bajo. (The string of islands making up the territory of Indonesia separate the Pacific Ocean from the Indian Ocean. There are strong tidal movements between these oceans which result in large and extremely dangerous whirlpools at critical locations).

Some days later we took the same boat and worked our way by various means back to Jakarta. We had missed out on being in the wrong place (Maumere) at the wrong time by a matter of hours - far less than a millisecond in a geologic time scale.

One small piece of trivia: the Indonesian banknote for 5,000 Rupiah features a particular group of volcanoes on Flores island.

Their three craters have, through various eruptions, formed three lakes each with a different colour - that is, until the 1992 earthquake caused part of the separating walls to collapse. The colours became mixed and are now in various shades of blue as shown below.

What a wonderful (unsolicited) article. Many thanks **-Ed.**
Ian also provided the following work history

I joined the UK firm (Sir M. MacDonald & Partners) in 1976 to work on irrigation design and construction in Iraq. From 1978 to1980 I worked for SMEC on the Cimanuk River Basin Project in Indonesia. From 1980-84 I worked for Cameron McNamara in Brisbane (mainly in Australia), from 1984-1986 for Rural Management International (in Sumatra, Indonesia), from 1986-1993 for BCEOM, French Engineering Consultants, France (in Indonesia, The Philippines and Cambodia). In 1993 I joined the Asian Development Bank in Manila to prepare and implement projects in Indonesia, Malaysia, The Philippines, Cambodia, Bangladesh, China). I retired from ADB in 2007 and have since worked as a consultant for projects in Cambodia and Vietnam and now live in Hanoi.

There's many a slip …
… in the Bras and Things shop.

My Life of Hydrography

Part 6

Ray Alford

One of the new sites was located on the Proserpine River at a proposed damsite. There had previously been a floatwell at the station, but it was of an early design and was prone to overtopping during flood time. The new gauging station was a GE erected high above the maximum flood level. Although only about a half hour drive from the town of Proserpine, the road to the site wound its way up the valley floor and would become impassable when the river rose. If high level gaugings were to be obtained, it would be necessary to camp on site.

Bill ordered a camping hut for this purpose which was duly delivered via rail from Rocklea to the Proserpine rail station. Geoff had hired a carrier to take the hut to site, but we had to load and unload the parts of the hut ourselves. Bill knew what a camping hut was but even though neither Geoff nor I had seen one before, we were tasked with the erection of this one. We were eventually confronted by a pile of panels and brackets on the bank of the Proserpine River without any assembly instructions.

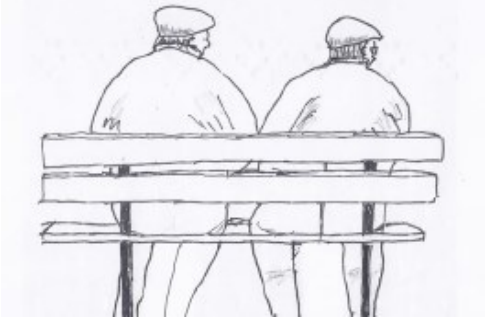
The floor comprised four wooden panels each six-feet square. These sat on nine stumps which we cut from nearby trees and buried in the ground. There were a number of included anchor bolts designed to bolt the floor to the stumps. The installation of each one required holes to be bored through the stumps and the flooring, a laborious task for a hand cranked auger. We debated the need for installing all the supplied bolts but decided to use all of them. Several years later I had need to reflect on this decision and wished that we had installed more. The hut was completed, and though not quite to design, it became Bill's pride and joy. I don't think we stayed at the hotel in Proserpine again after the completion of that hut.

My first wet season in Mackay was 1974. This was the year of the devastating Brisbane floods from cyclone Wanda, but the rest of Queensland also copped a drenching from Wanda and four other cyclones. Most days saw us measuring large flows from cableways and travellers. Travellers consisted of a fixed cable across the river from which a current meter could be suspended. The meter could be winched horizontally across the stream and lowered vertically into the flow by the use of a large double drum hand winch at one end of the cable. The gauging station at Pleystowe, just outside of Mackay, was so equipped. Obtaining measurements from this site was a high priority so we often spent time there when the Pioneer was in flood. Winding the winches was hard work and not something we looked forward to.

We would groan when the propeller on the meter became entangled in weed and we would have to winch the meter all the way back to clear it. It was not uncommon for this to happen several times during a measurement. In any case, we did manage to obtain a good spread of high flow measurement which seemed to please Bill immensely. I was less than pleased when we inspected the traveller pulley on the far bank several months later. The traversing pulley was frozen and hadn't been turning. No wonder the winch was so hard to crank!

The remainder of this wet season passed in a never-ending succession of measuring flow, walking through mud and being drenched. Because this was my first wet season working in hydrography, I thought that this was normal when, in fact, it was the third most active cyclone season on record. As well as being a good year for learning flood measuring techniques, 1974 also gave me my first experience in a completely different activity – helicopter operations.

The Commission had been using helicopters for several years to service gauging stations in North Queensland. As was often the case in the wet season (between December and May), many of the roads and tracks were impassable due to flooding and boggy conditions. The bitumen didn't extend much further than between the main towns and the road to Mt Isa from Townsville was only partly sealed. As this was also the time that most of the annual flow occurred, it was important to ensure that instruments kept going. Helicopters were used to visit the more remote gauging stations once or twice during the "wet". Additionally, flow measurements could be obtained at stations that were otherwise dry during regular visits. A contract was let each year for a number of flying hours (usually around 100) and the contract awarded to the lowest tenderer.



"Bloody politicians! No matter how loudly I point out the error of their ways when they appear on television, they never change!"

The bigger they are …
… the more likely they'll win the giant pumpkin prize.

My Life of Hydrography (continued)

Although the helicopter was used mostly to service the Mareeba and Townsville recorders, one visit was allocated for the more remote Mackay stations. I was pretty excited at my first chance to ride in a helicopter. My entire flying experience up to then was a couple of flights in a light aircraft. I hadn't even flown in a domestic jet. This trip began with a journey by train to Townsville and an overnight stay at the People's Palace. The next morning, I was sitting in the back seat of a Jetranger, hemmed in by all sorts of equipment and spares, bound for the gauging station at the Burdekin Falls. Roy Mincher was navigating, a map on his lap, giving instructions to the pilot. Travel time was short between stations and time was of the essence as you had to make your day's destination before dark. The helicopter couldn't fly at night and most pilots were not amiable to a night spent without camping gear and food, so it was essential to service the recorder and measure flow in the shortest possible time. I was not experienced enough to be given the responsibility for the instrumentation so Roy would head for the hut while I would measure the flow. The pilot would help with the flow measurement and book the gauging as it progressed. This was a good thing for me, as the pilot would try to land near the measuring section to save himself a walk. This was not such a good thing though for the person servicing the instrument. If the instrument needed some repair, he would have to trudge back and forth between the helicopter and instrument shelter to get the spare parts needed.

We serviced five stations that day, and the novelty of flying in a helicopter had well and truly worn off by the time we landed that evening behind the Nebo hotel. Geoff and Bill were there to meet us along with the two drums of Avgas that they brought with them. Geoff took off in the helicopter the next day with Roy to service stations along the Broken river and I returned to Mackay with Bill.

Apart from the normal instrumentation at gauging stations, there were now other types of instruments that we would routinely service. The Bureau of Meteorology was the owner of several remote pluviographs in our area and it was our responsibility to maintain them. Pluviographs give a continuous record of rainfall and are used to derive intensity data for hydrological analysis. Most post offices operated a BOM Dynes pluviograph for this purpose along with other weather-related instruments. The problem for the Bureau was that this data was usually not representative of rainfall across a river catchment. Manual rain measurements were available elsewhere but these daily readings didn't yield intensity data. To address this shortfall, pluviographs, capable of long-term recording, were installed in remote locations.

It was the Bureau's responsibility to record rainfall, but in reality, this type of instrumentation was usually located at sites specified by our own hydrologists with little interest by the BOM in the data collected by them. Our hydrologists required long term records while the Bureau was more interested in what was happening at the moment.

The pluviographs consisted of a standard Leupold and Stevens strip recorder attached to a tipping bucket rain gauge. The rain gauge comprised an eight-inch, funnel-shaped catch, under which were mounted two, triangular shaped, pivoting containers. These were arranged so that at any time, one was directly below the bottom of the gauge. When it was raining, the container would fill until the weight of water was sufficient to overbalance. Arranged like a seesaw, the other container would then swing up and be positioned to catch the rain. These containers would tip when the weight of water was equivalent to that received from 0.2mm rainfall. During the tipping process, a magnet attached to the tipping mechanism would pass a switch, momentarily closing a contact which would in turn activate a solenoid on the chart recorder. This motion caused the pen to move slightly across the chart. Because the chart was moving at a constant velocity, the intensity of the rain could be easily computed. The pluviographs were generally reliable. A typical service would involve winding the recorder negator spring, changing batteries or chart if required, and cleaning out the debris in the rain gauge. Because the instruments were located in high rainfall areas in the ranges behind Mackay, it was nearly always raining when we were there. Unlike our gauging stations, the instruments had no hut to protect them, only a simple cover over the chart recorder, making the servicing task difficult as we tried to protect the instrument and ourselves from the rain.

The other instrument type was a Foxboro recorder. These were used to record river heights and were a low-cost alternative to a true gauging station. The operating principle was that of a pressure gauge whereby the pressure of water in the stream was indicated by a large dial gauge. A pen was attached to the end of the dial which rested on a circular chart turned slowly by a wind up clock mechanism. As the clock turned, the hydrograph was drawn in a circular fashion around the centre of the chart.

... to be continued.

The early bird …
… must be insomniac.

Memories of Leslie Dam

Part 4

Hector Macdonald

Phyl was a charming woman and I enjoyed the outing. I decided to have lessons and so paid 12 shillings and sixpence on each of two occasions for an hour's tuition from the local professional at Warwick, a young chap named Errol Hartvixen. It is the only coaching I have paid for at sport in my life. He told me to practise and that I would have a handicap of eight. Unfortunately I played very little at Leslie Dam and seldom played the game afterwards, apart from a social game which has averaged about one per year.

Because golf was so popular at the dam, the supporters formed the Leslie Dam Social Golf Club – and I was made President. Not only did I know nothing about golf I was totally unaware of what was expected of a President. So one day I went in to Warwick to play and had a chat to Noel Freemantle, the Club President. He was a helpful fellow. While I was in there I met his daughter, Anna. I would have liked to have got a lot of help from her too, but it was merely a fleeting encounter.

While making preparations for the dance someone said we needed to get a piano. Someone else said that we should ask Noel Freemantle if we could borrow his for the evening. This seemed an eminently sensible idea to me as it provided an opportunity for me to ring the Freemantles and possibly speak to their daughter. If we managed to get a piano we would need transport to bring it to the dam so that meant using one of the Commission's trucks. At that stage of my life I had no idea of the effort involved in moving a piano so I could see no problem in asking Taylor if we could use one of the trucks on site. Fortunately somebody broke the news about the piano to Taylor before I got a chance to talk to him. He was shocked at the thought of people who worked for him approaching a local dignitary such as the President of the Warwick Golf Club and asking for permission to remove an heirloom such as the family piano from the premises. So Taylor fronted me one day and remarked out of the blue that every time you shifted an iron frame piano it was necessary to retune it and that maybe I should think again about ringing Freemantle.

I had an answer for Taylor. I told him that I had no intention of borrowing the piano and that the purpose of the phone call was simply a chance for me to speak to his daughter whom I had met at the club and who may wish to come to the dance. I have no doubt that Taylor knew that I meant what I said and I think he felt somewhat embarrassed for being just a little bit naive. As it turned out I never rang Freemantle and so I never spoke to Anna.

The dance was a great success. The canteen sold drinks all night. Crowds of people, male and female came from Warwick, but Anna was not among them.

One night at the canteen there was a small group left at the end of the night when Frank Leach closed the bar – they were Les Warren, Kev Kennedy, Ken Spressor and myself. Warren was feeling a bit toey and suggested we go over to Cossie's pub (the Darling Downs Hotel). We all agreed this was a splendid idea and so arrived there about 10 pm. The place was empty and Cosgrove was getting ready to lock up. He welcomed us and we all started to drink together. A couple of hours later I looked at my watch – it was 12.05. The date was now 25 July. Amidst the talking and singing going on amongst the group I broke some important news. Today was my 21st birthday. Nobody believed me. I assured them it was true. Cosgrove put on free drinks. The party notched up a gear or two. At daylight, around 6 am, we felt it was time to move on. We drove back to camp, had a shower, had breakfast, and started work at 7.30. It was a long day. The news broke that it was my 21st. Jess Hastie who ran the kitchen in the mess, together with the other ladies who worked there, made a cake during the day. That night we had a small informal party in the canteen complete with cake, candles and all the trimmings. At 10.00 the canteen closed and we adjourned to the single men's lines. I left around 11.00 and went to bed – it had been a long two days. The rest kept on partying. A couple of days later I visited the women in the kitchen and thanked them for their kindness in making me a cake. I gave them all a large box of chocolates. It was the first birthday party I had had since the one with my mother and Sarah McIvor at Emu Vale eighteen years previously.

Apart from this isolated event, the social life at Leslie Dam was non-existent. One of the foremen, Roy Maxted, lived with his wife Iris in a married quarter. Most quarters had television but the reception was patchy. One night per week over a period of a couple of months I went down there after dinner to watch TV. It was the only time I was invited to anyone's home for any occasion. Taylor put on Christmas drinks at the end of the year at his house but it was more of an official business function rather than anything else.

There was one week when I had the family car up at the dam. This was brought about because of a mixup in transport arrangements during a period when Les Warren was on holidays.

Continued next page ...

If you don't like the heat …
… move to a cold climate.

Memories of Leslie Dam (continued)

One of the diamond drillers, Bunna Weedon, had driven me to Brisbane on the Friday night and dropped me off out at Ipswich Road, South Brisbane. He said he would pick me up there again on the Sunday at 6 pm. My father drove me over and we waited but Bunna never turned up. My father did not use the car during the week so I was able to take it back to Leslie Dam. (Bunna came to see me on the Monday to tell me he had not come back to camp until early Sunday morning. I had known Bunna from my time at Borumba when he was a driller up there and had expected more of him. I had nothing further to do with him.) As I had transport at Warwick for a week I took the opportunity to sample the night life. Jim Mienert and I went in and we drank at the Lanham Hotel. Jim was not a beer drinker – he only had gin squash. I decided to be sociable and to drink what he did. After I had downed a dozen or so I came to the conclusion that it had no intoxicating effect on me whatsoever. I felt perfect. Eventually we left to come home thoroughly disappointed at the supply of eligible young females in Warwick on a week night in winter.

While the Consul was running well there was something wrong with the lights – maybe it was a battery problem. Whatever the cause, the effect was that we had to drive home virtually in the dark, the headlights having a range of about only five yards. While we were sailing along on the road out of Warwick using natural instinct more than visual observation to keep the car on the road I suddenly noticed about three yards in front of the car this enormous cow. This striped animal was standing in the middle of a bitumen road on a cold winter's night chewing its cud and snorting jets of fog out its nostrils. By the time my foot reached the brake the cow was already dead. The car stopped at the side of the road. Jim and I got out to survey the scene, swore profusely at the cow and waited for assistance. One motorist heading for Warwick promised to contact the Warwick police. They must have, because eventually a police car from Warwick arrived. They organised a tow truck to remove the cow from the road and to take the car to a panel beater's yard in Warwick. The police were kind enough to ignore the fact that I had spent the night in the Lanham Hotel drinking gin. This was because it was 1962 (no breathalysers in those days) and country police accepted that people in the bush needed to drive to get home. I asked the policeman who had right of way – the cow or me. He said that the cow had no right to be standing on the highway but that unless somebody came along and claimed ownership of the dead carcass, there was nothing I could do. I thought to myself what a wise policeman this was – he must surely know everything that there is to know about law.

After the tow truck took the Consul away the policeman drove Jim and me back to camp. It had not been a very successful night.

Fortunately there were no repercussions from the accident. The car was repaired in two weeks, the insurance company paid the bill, and I delivered the car back to my father. At the time I thought the incident was a mere trifle but I am sure now that my father did not see it this way. He never complained about my conduct, probably because he had spent a good part of his life in the bush and knew that meandering cattle could be a danger on the road, especially at night. With hindsight I can now see that all children, at some time in their life, do things that worry and trouble their parents.

Despite the lack of social life at Leslie Dam, the bush environment provided its own type of excitement. Having spent my early childhood years, as well as several school holidays, out at Emu Vale, 16 miles south of Warwick, as opposed to the dam which was seven miles to the west, I was aware of possible sources of trouble in the bush.

As winter passed and the hotter months of October and November approached, one particular topic of conversation both at work and after hours was about snakes. One day in the office Taylor pronounced to all present that there was no danger of snakes at the dam site as all the noise from plant, machinery and heavy traffic would keep them away. Nobody argued with the boss when he was making an announcement in his official capacity as Project Engineer. (I think Taylor felt there was a certain degree of infallibility involved whenever a Project Engineer delivered official announcements to the workforce.) However, the fact that nobody disagreed did not mean that anybody agreed.

You will not be surprised, dear reader, to find Hector's next instalment begins with a tale about a snake. But you can hold your baited breath - ***Ed.***

St Barnabas Bulletin Board

The weekend Fasting and Prayer Conference includes meals

An Englishman's home …
… is two up, two down and claustrophobic.

HEALTH *and beauty*

What Can we Expect from Life?

Life expectancy has certainly soared over the past century or so. This is largely due to improvements in medical science which has eliminated many of the previous killers such as smallpox, typhoid, tuberculosis etc. It is also attributable to better nutrition though lifestyle with increased obesity etc has had a negative effect. Across the globe life expectancy for men has risen from 48.1 years in 1950 to 70.5 today and for women from 52.9 to 75.6. Australians have done even better with the expectation greater than 80 for both sexes.

The longest living person (whose age was reliably recorded) was Jeanne Louise Calment of Arles who died in 1997 at the age of 122 years and 164 days. She outlived her husband by more than half a century and her only daughter by 63 years.

She was the beneficiary of one of the most misjudged deals ever made. In 1965, because of financial difficulties, she agreed to leave her apartment to a lawyer in return for 2500 francs per month until she died. As she was then aged 90, it looked like a good deal for the lawyer. But he died first, thirty years after signing the deal, having paid her 900,000 francs for an apartment he never occupied.

...from *The Body: A guide for Occupants* by Bill Bryson

ATP

Here is another anecdote condensed from Bill Bryson's *The Body*

The stuff responsible for the energy in our cells is a chemical called adenosine triphosphate, or ATP which may be the most important thing in your body you have never heard of. Every molecule of ATP is like a tiny battery that stores up energy and then releases it to power all the activities required by your cells. The chemistry involved is magnificently complex. Here is one sentence from a chemistry text book explaining a little of what it does. "Being polyanionic and featuring potentially chelatable polyphosphate group, ATP binds metal cations with high affinity."

Every day you produce and use your own body weight in ATP – some 200 trillion trillion molecules of it. But because ATP is consumed more or less instantaneously, you have only 60 grams of it within you at any given moment.

The person who figured this out was an eccentric self-funded scientist named Peter Mitchell who in the early '60s inherited a fortune and set up a research centre in a stately home in Cornwall.

Mitchell wore shoulder-length hair and an earring at a time when that was especially unusual among serious scientists. He was also famously forgetful. At his daughter's wedding, he approached another guest and confessed that she looked familiar, though he couldn't quite place her. "I was your first wife," she answered.

"I'm so depressed. The future simply isn't what it used to be."

The Secret of Longevity

Among my collection of Travellers Tales is this alternative claim. I have lost sight of its origin - **Ed.**

At Great Wollaston is a small thatched cottage, the birthplace and home of the oldest Englishman who ever lived. Thomas Parr was born in 1483 and lived to see ten monarchs on the throne. He joined the army at 17, returning to run the family farm at 35. He married for the first time when he was 80, had an affair and an illegitimate child when he was 100 and married again at 122.

When he was 152, he was taken to London to meet Charles I who asked the secret of his longevity. "Moral temperance and a vegetarian diet," he replied. Unfortunately the foul stench of London polluted his lungs and he died in 1635. He is buried in Westminster Abbey.

Exercise those Brain Cells

Q. A long distance rally driver notices that he has driven 15951 km since he set out and that this number is a palindrome. He drives for another two hours and again the number on his odometer is a palindrome. At what average speed was he travelling?

Answer to last Issue's Teaser

Q. What was significant about 2 February 2000?

A. The date, 02-02-2000 is the first time since 28-08-888 when all the figures were even numbers.

Where there's a will …
…there's a bunch of anxious potential heirs.

Litter to the Editor

These were printed in The Courier Mail on 8 and 9 April respectively.

Dams are in the wrong location

THE parlous position of south-east Queensland's water supply is highlighted by the fact 13 of the region's dams are overflowing (C-M, Apr 7), but there is nowhere meaningful for that water to go.

Wivenhoe and Somerset dams are notoriously ill-situated to exploit the eastern seaboard's rain events as the range separating them from the coast acts as a natural rain shadow.

Yet when the SEQ Water Grid was conceived no one thought to transfer the dam spillage to drier storage areas.

Well, it's too late now as another golden opportunity to optimise wet season rainfall has gone begging.

Entering the dry season with our dams at barely 60 per cent capacity and fresh water pouring into the Pacific is a sad indictment of how badly Queensland's most precious resource is managed.

And don't expect water restrictions until the state's reserves are dangerously low.

Richard Marman, Meridan Plains

WIVENHOE NOT A RAIN DAM

RICHARD Marman (Letters, Apr 8) makes the same mistake as the ABC News presenter earlier this week who closed his weather report with the plea "please let some rain fall on Wivenhoe".

Why is it so hard for people to grasp the concept that insufficient rain falls in the catchment for Wivenhoe Dam to be a reliable supply of water for a city of Brisbane's size?

Wivenhoe Dam was built expressly for the purpose of flood mitigation after the Australia Day floods of 1974.

The dam's status may have been revised to water supply during the "millennium drought" but that didn't change its location, which is a low rainfall area.

When the Goss government succumbed to opposition to the proposed Wolffdene Dam, its solution was to follow the advice of prophet of doom Tim Flannery who told us that the traditional Queensland wet seasons would never return due to climate change.

Wivenhoe Dam's status was changed and allowed to eventually fill, with disastrous results in January 2011.

Alwyn Keepence, Goodna

One hates to think what the 2011 flood might have been like if this had been a high rainfall area!

If only the "experts" in the community would advise the Government of the many sites located in the right places, it would make planning so much easier and economical.

And I'm sure the Government would just get on and build all the dams other letter writers demand - **Ed.**

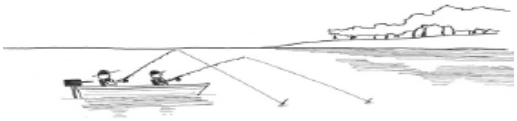
A Sign of the Times

Terry's Trivia *(answers on page 12)*

1. Ribollita is a type of Italian: (i) Pasta; (ii) Soup; (iii) Salad; (iv) Dessert; (v) Dance; (vi) Song.
2. Which Italian name stands for fake investment schemes? (i) Silvio Berlusconi; (ii) Charles Ponzi; (iii) Giorgio Armani; (iv) Michael Buble; (v) Robert De Niro.
3. Which country has the world's only non-rectangular flag: (i) Tibet; (ii) Mongolia; (iii) Bangladesh; (iv) Bhutan; (v) Nepal.
4. *Eucalyptus haemastoma* is the: (i) Salmon gum; (ii) Blue gum; (iii) Scribbly gum; (iv) Spotted gum; (v) Sweet gum; (vi) Bubble gum.
5. The Swahili phrase 'hakuna matata' roughly translated mean: (i) Good morning; (ii) no worries (iii) welcome; (iv) how are you?; (v) Good bye.
6. Which countries does Lake Constance NOT have a border with: (i) France; (ii) Germany; (iii) Switzerland; (iv) Italy; (v) Austria.
7. Bill Gates' strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions exclude: (i) Eating synthetic meat; (ii) installing solar panels; (iii) buying green jet fuel; (iv) showering less; (v) going early to bed; (vi) giving up alcohol.
8. The pub that inspired "The Pub with No Beer" is in: (i) Glen Innes; (ii) Oodnadatta; (iii) Kalgoorlie; (iv) Ingham. (v) Junee; (vi) Echuca.

Seeing the Point of Masks

There's few Covid rules that I mind
but the point of the masks? I can't see;
without glasses I'm virtually blind,
with a mask they're as foggy can be.



"I had a great Public Holiday. I caught up with a couple of mates at the pub, read a book and watched a movie on TV. What did your wife make you do?".

Birds of a feather …
… must be plucked before cooking.

Book Club

We were recently at a Sunday Market, idly looking at the titles of second hand books for sale when my eye was caught by *The Ghost* by Robert Harris. I had read and enjoyed several of Harris's books, so thought I would risk the $2 asking price.

Adam Lang, a recently retired British prime minister now holed up in his publisher's luxury compound on Martha's Vineyard in the dead of winter, is under pressure to complete memoirs for which, it is rumoured, Lang has been paid $10 million. The ghostwriter of the title, whose name we never discover, is brought in to rewrite the manuscript after Lang's original collaborator was found dead, drowned in distinctly fishy circumstances. Our narrator has barely sat down to interview his subject when word comes that the International Criminal Court would like to see Lang in the dock.

Having located what may be the lethal secret, the replacement ghostwriter begins to fear for his own safety. He tussles to reconcile his obligation to complete the ghosting job with its attendant abundant payment on the one hand and, on the other, the pressing need, as he sees it, to reveal Lang's true allegiances. He comes under increasing jeopardy: romantically and politically, as well as physically in a rattling good yarn.

The clear parallels between the fictional Adam Lang and the real-life Tony Blair and the respective wives perhaps add interest to the book.

Without doubt, this is the best $2 read I've ever had.

Ian Pullar

Readers may have noticed that I have passed on some extracts from Bill Bryson's fascinating book "The Body" (page 10) which was recommended by Helen Scheu (and Ken Watson) in Newsletter 94. Even if members don't feel up to writing a review of a good book, I (and I expect other readers) would appreciate recommendations of titles - **Ed.**

The (future) Queen's English

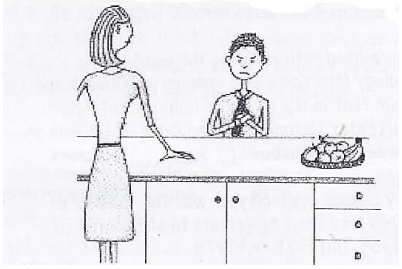
What is being done to the English language which I love so much? Readers will not be surprised to know that I cringe at the ever increasing Americanisation with pronunciations like 's**k**edule' in**teg**ral and for**mid**-able and the use of alien terms such as sidewalk and gotten. But even worse, journalists seem to have lost any understanding of the construction of sentences.

Take for example, two extracts from *The Courier Mail* that relate to the future Queen.

1. "Prince William and Catherine released a new photo of .. Prince Louis to mark his third birthday. Dressed in his school uniform, the couple shared a private snap …" All I can say is it must have been pretty squeezy for both parents in the three year old's clothes.

2. "Just days after marking a decade of marriage, Prince William and Kate's only daughter Princess Charlotte is celebrating her sixth birthday." I know that in mediaeval times princesses were often betrothed at a very early age for strategic reasons, but for Princess Charlotte to be married four years before she was even born must be something of a record.

Answers to Terry's Trivia *(page 11)*
1. (ii) Soup. 2. (ii) Charles Ponzi. 3. (v) Nepal. (iii) Scribbly Gum. 5. (ii) no worries. 6. (i) France (iv) Italy. 7. (iv) showering less; (v) going early to bed; (vi) giving up alcohol. 8. (iv) Ingham.



"What is it about you, son? Is it ignorance or apathy?"
"I don't know and I don't care."

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The trouble with the rat race is that even when you win you're still a rat.