

VicRoads Association

Newsletter No 199



Membership of the Association is available to all who have been members of VicRoads or forerunner organisations or the spouse of deceased members and bestows on them all the rights of the Rules of Association. Current cost of membership is a once only fee of \$30 plus a joining fee of \$5. Enquiries about membership or receipt of the Newsletter by e-mail should be directed to the Secretary at 60 Denmark Street Kew 3101 or by phone or e-mail as shown in the footer below. An application for membership of the Association can be found at the end of the Newsletter.

Dear Members,

For the last few months I have been writing about family history including my own life story. I have written many of these tales in my head – and a few of them on paper – but none of them satisfied me. Some of the stories I've written down in the past embarrass me. I think I was trying to be too clever. Reading them now makes me cringe. As I grow older, I lament that I did not record the stories that my parents told, so now they are forever lost except for a few that snagged in my memory.

I don't want to make the same mistake with my children and my grandchildren. I want them to know something about me other than as the clown and 'kissing monster' they all know me as. They know little of my life experiences, my family, and the story of their ancestors. I hope this will enlighten them – for better or worse.

I hope to give them an understanding of the very different world in which I lived very happily and securely without prejudice and need. I pretty much stumbled through life without ambition or any idea of a life plan. Things just seemed to happen to me, mostly for the better, and I am content for my life lived, and all credit for this must go to my parents who not only provided me with my nature but also enhanced it by their nurture of my soul, even though there were some aspects they could never come to terms with such as my lifelong support for the Australian Labor Party and my atheism. I was an engineer for most of my life. I had no burning desire to study engineering, but I don't regret my career. And yet I could easily have selected some other path and perhaps my life could have turned out quite differently, but we'll never know. I can only tell the story of my life as I have lived it, rather than the life I might have led.

I don't think I am alone in wanting to tell this story at this time of my life – at age 76. Other friends of a similar vintage have the same motivation. When Mum and Dad told me their stories, I thought I was invincible. Death was a long way off. But it is not too far away for me now. I realise that I will probably shuffle off this mortal coil within the next 10 years - if I am lucky to last so long - and within two generations I will be totally forgotten. Even with a record such as this, I bet my effort won't last beyond my grandchildren. Unless I achieve something historically noteworthy soon I will become extinct. But I think it is worth a try.



The records of the past are few; brief statements in the early press, the formal testament of official documents, my mother's scrapbook and the fading photographs in shoeboxes or albums. I have started this too late in that there are no people of my parent's generation left, although I have some older cousins who remembered Mum and Dad going back to before they were married.

While I want my children to understand more about my life – and how different it was to theirs – I have come to understand that life in the 20th and 21st Centuries changes at a far more rapid rate than in earlier history. A farm worker in feudal times probably led a similar life to his father or grandfather. His breadth of experience was much the same as his forebears and only a fraction of what a similar worker might experience now. The life I led as a boy would be beyond the ken of my grandchildren. As I started to write this history, I soon came to realise that I understand little of the lives and tribulations of my grandparents and their ancestors. Their pioneering spirit, while brought on by necessity, was nonetheless heroic. They were Australia's refugees and asylum seekers of the 19th Century and I am so grateful that they were welcomed here, as I am grateful for their modest contributions in making Australia. Think deeply, if these people did not have the guts to come here, none of us would exist.

David Jellie - Editor

Dates for your diary

Our program this year is as follows:

DATE	TIME	EVENT	
October	Monday 9	12 noon	Occasional lunch, Shoppingtown Hotel
	Thursday 12	6.00 pm	Drinks and dinner at Waverley RSL
	Monday 30	9.50 am	Visit to VicRoads South Eastern Projects
November	Monday 27	12 noon	Occasional lunch, Shoppingtown Hotel
December	Monday 4	12 noon	Christmas lunch at Kew HO
2018			
February	Monday 12	12 noon	Occasional lunch, Shoppingtown Hotel
	Friday 23		Members and Guests Golf Day at Green Acres Golf Club, East Kew



What's coming up

Occasional Lunches – Shoppingtown Hotel – Monday 9th October

Bookings are not essential, but it would help with arrangements if you can let Kelvin York know on 9438 1028 if you can attend. We hope to see you there – and partners and guests are welcome.

Drinks and Dinner at Waverley RSL – Thursday 12th October

This is an opportunity for friends and colleagues and their partners to get together in very pleasant circumstances to enjoy dinner together- at a very reasonable price. It is a good opportunity to get your old work groups together for a bit of fun. If you can make it, please contact Ken Vickery on 0409 561 618 or kenvickery@tpg.com.au so that we can arrange the catering. We always have a good attendance at these - so if you haven't been before come and join us. It is a great night.

Visit to VicRoads South Eastern Projects – Monday 30th October at 9.50 am

We propose to meet at 10am at the Hallam Project Office (40 Belgrave- Hallam Rd, at the Monash Freeway Interchange). Project Director, South Eastern Projects, Ray Patterson who will take over from Charlie Broadhurst, will lead a presentation on the following projects- Monash Freeway Upgrade (Stage 1- \$400M, Stage 2 \$600M); Thompsons Road Upgrade & level crossing removal (\$240M); Hallam Road Duplication/ South Gippsland Highway intersection Upgrade (\$40M); PHE Traralgon to Sale (\$260M); South Gippsland Highway Koonwarra (Black Spur) realignment (dinosaur fossil site) (\$50M); and Mordialloc Bypass (\$300M). There will be a light lunch before a bus tour of the Cranbourne- Pakenham growth area.

Please let Jim Webber know if you propose to come by 21st October. Again, we can arrange car pooling if anyone wants a lift.

While friends and partners are welcome to come along, local Government councillors and CEOs should not be invited as our visits should not be used for political



WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING

Visit to Melbourne Metro Rail Authority – Monday 31st July

Thirty six members and friends turned up for this wonderful presentation given by Lachlan Lee-Archer, Operations Manager of Surface Transport and Modelling (MMRA).

Lachlan reminded us again of the scope of the project as shown on the map below.

Procurement will be achieved through four major contracts. These are:

- Early works. These are underway and involve demolition and relocation of services, etc.
- Metro tunnel and stations. This is the major contract and a preferred partnership has been selected. The main partners include Lendlease, John Holland, Bouygues Constructions (France), Hassell, Weston Williamson and Partners, Arcadis, Capella and Arup (and over 70 other organizations).
- Rail systems. Main partners include CPB, Bombardier, Melbourne Metro, and MMRA as an alliance and eight key support organisations
- Rail infrastructure (TBA)



Arden Station - Interior



Parkville Station - Interior



The layout of the Metro Tunnel project



Domain Interchange



CBD South – Cutaway view



CBD South - Interior



CBD South - Cutaway view



Tunnel construction will be carried out simultaneously on three fronts – the two end sections with tunnel boring machines and the central section by road header as shown below



Parkville Station - Interior



Tunnel boring machine

The tunnel boring machines will be similar to the ones used in the Crossrail tunnel in London.

Following Lachlan's presentation there was a question and answer session – the main topics were as follows:

- Large buildings of 40 and 10 storeys were proposed above the two city stations. Is their design and construction part of the main contract? Yes.
- The main contract was based on the reference design. Can improvements be made to this? Yes.
- Will there be pedestrian tunnels extending under Royal Parade from Parkville station? Yes.
- Are losing bidders compensated? Yes- \$15M each. The project can use intellectual property from losing bidders.
- What is geology under Yarra? Mudstone - the tunnel is 10m below river bed.
- What are the arrangements for the disposal of spoil? Up to contractor.
- Is use of local materials and labour specified? Yes up to limits.
- Why no station at South Yarra? No economic case and plenty of other transport options for users.
- Effects of vibration at Melbourne University? Vibrations will be monitored.
- Are there KPI's for site safety? Yes - independent reviewer to monitor and review safety.
- Any proposal to video progress as was done for London's Crossrail? Yes.
- Is the tunnel boring machine specifically designed for the project? Yes.
- Extent of public consultation - particularly around stations. General description provided.
- Can 2026 end date be beaten? Yes.
- Can the tunnel boring machines be used on future tunnelling projects? They could but usual practice is to write them off after completion of a project. Depends on geology and geometry.

President David Jellie extended a vote of thanks to Lachlan and to Sarah Chapman of MMRA who assisted in making all the arrangements and especially the very generous and delicious morning tea.

NEWS FROM VICROADS

Semi-autonomous Trials

I don't know how many of you saw the excellent documentary on Channel 2 during Science Week on Artificial Intelligence. Part of it dwelt on autonomous vehicles of the future. I have no doubt that these vehicles are the future and that driving on the roads will be a much more pleasant experience, much safer, less polluting and provide more reliability in travel. But as the program showed there will be skeptics who will perhaps not resist the change altogether but slow it down through their failure to accept it. People will find it hard to accept that artificial intelligence will make quicker and wiser decisions than drivers despite the fact that driver error currently contributes to about 80% of road crashes.

The CEO of VicRoads mentioned that trials have commenced in Melbourne on CityLink with the cooperation of Transurban. He was able to drive in Mercedes, Volvo and BMW vehicles with state-of-the-art driver assistance technologies. He reported that it was an exciting and pleasant experience. Part of his learning when he was overseas recently was how important trials of this technology are. It's critically important that the technology has access to our road system so that it can be tested and developed. It's equally important that the community has every opportunity to progressively learn about this technology, in order to build trust in it.

And what would we do without the ABC to screen such a program.

NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS

Geoff Hose and his Fijian Team

Geoff contacted me recently to say that the first contingent of VicRoads personnel to be engaged on the Fiji Road Upgrade Project (FRUP) left Australia for Fiji on 23 June 1987. This is approximately 30 years ago and to mark the occasion Geoff had a reunion lunch at his house in Abbotsford on Friday 7 July.

FRUP was the first of many projects undertaken by VicRoads in Fiji. Geoff was the team leader. If memory serves me correctly VicRoads personnel were engaged continuously for about 15 years one way or another.

All of the VicRoads' staff members were great representatives of Australia in Fiji and established good relations with their counterpart organizations and personnel as well as with the funding agencies - the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and AusAID.

I also recall that the team's mobilization was affected by political unrest that occurred shortly before their departure. On May 14, 1987, Lt. Col. Sitiveni Rabuka along with 10 soldiers in gas masks hijacked and incarcerated the elected government of Timoci Bavadra. There were a number of players involved in the May coup, including members of the Royal Fiji Military Forces and indigenous Fijian activists who were all known Alliance Party members who refused to accept the result of the April 1987 elections and, through a series of church meetings, formalized a destabilization campaign against the newly elected government. There are allegations that the President Ratu Mara gave his blessing to a military takeover after maintaining throughout the crisis that he had "no knowledge of the coup whatsoever."

The coup was executed to stifle collaboration between Indo-Fijians and indigenous Fijians for a non-racial political discourse. The Indo-Fijian community was severely affected and many of its members left Fiji for destinations such as Australia to seek security. A second coup in the same year severed Fiji's ties with the Commonwealth and deposed Governor General Ratu Penaia Ganilau. Racial tensions remained despite Fiji's three post-coup constitution reviews and in May 2000, armed gunmen held government ministers hostage for 56 days and coordinated race attacks against Indo-Fijians from the parliament.

As a result of the 2000 coup, the indigenous Fijian-dominated Qarase government came to power. However, by 2006, the Qarase government and the military had started a public fight over government policies and bills, which resulted in the December 2006 takeover.



And here they are – including Ken Barnhill, Barry Bromham, Les Bull, Greg Carter, Lyle Grinter, Peter Hassett, Mike Hodgson, Geoff Hose, Cliff Lawton and John Moylan and partners.

Alan Mackinlay

Alan submitted the following story about the erection of the Shepherd Bridge shared path.

Back on 27 October 2016, VicRoads Association paid a visit to VicRoads Western Projects' office in Footscray where [among other projects] Damian Van Dyke introduced us to the work being carried out to widen Shepherd Bridge under a contract with Fulton Hogan. Refer to Newsletter NO. 194 for the original report.

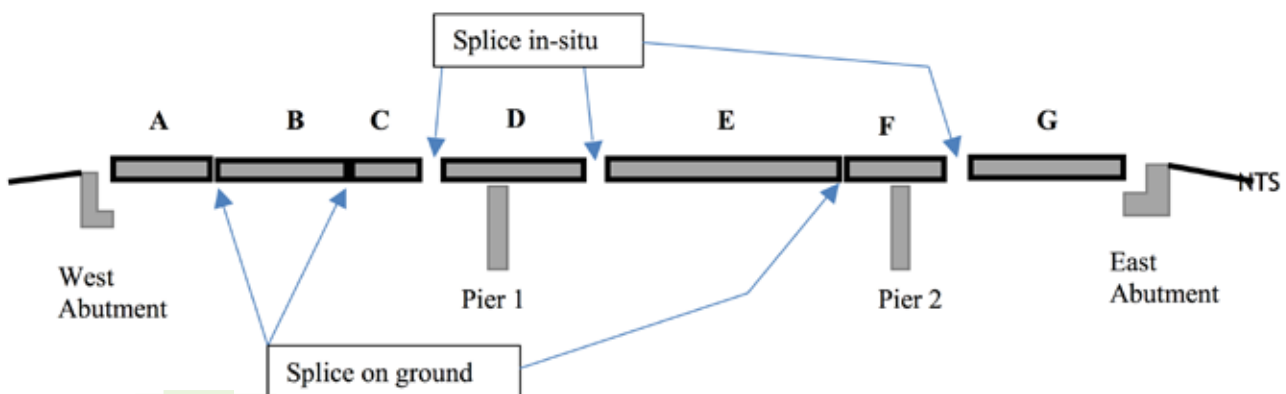
As I regularly travel through Footscray to collect my granddaughter for a weekend with her mother, I have kept up with progress and lack of progress on the project. The serious lack of progress was caused by the steel fabricator in Kilsyth going broke and the assets being transferred to another fabricator in Geelong.

The bridge superstructure was fabricated in seven sections, labelled A to G from western end to the east, with section length being determined by transport permit requirements, suitable stress points along the bridge and the proposed construction sequence.

The bridge erection sequence is shown in the diagram below.

- Stage 1** Section D placed on Pier 1 and uplift at west end restrained
- Stage 2** Sections A, B & C spliced together on site and then placed between west abutment and Section D and spliced insitu at C/D,
- Stage 3** Sections E & F spliced together on site and then placed between Pier 2 and Section D and spliced insitu at D/E,
- Stage 4** Section G placed between F and East Abutment and spliced insitu at F/G

At last, on 23-25 June the Shepherd Bridge was closed from 8:00 pm Friday to 6:00 am Monday and the steel beams were transported to site and placed between the abutments and over two piers, spanning the Maribyrnong River to provide a shared path for pedestrians and cyclists. This new structure replaced the original footpath of the old bridge which now forms part of the strengthened roadway on the new road bridge.





Stage 1: A 600t crane was placed on the road bridge on the bridge and steel section D was lifted on to Pier 1 while steel sections A, B & C were being spliced together. Each beam required over 300 bolts per splice – so for two beams and 6 splices there are over 3,600 bolts – hard work for two men with spanners and a torque wrench.



Stage 2: Steel section A-B-C was lifted using 600t and 350t cranes to connect the west abutment to steel section D on Pier 1. A-B-C was then spliced to section D.





Stage 3: Steel sections E and F were spliced together on the ground and then lifted on to Pier 2 and spliced insitu to D. Stage 4: Steel section G connected to E-F and the east abutment to complete the main superstructure.



Stage 4: General view of the completed superstructure

Shepherd Bridge was re-opened on Monday 26 June with the shared path steel sections ABCD in place and a revised plan to erect the river span and east end span the following weekend. That was duly accomplished and work progressed on installing deck slabs on the new bridge, handrails and all other finishing touches required to bring it into operational status.

I attended the site on 24 and 25 June and again on 2 July to photograph the construction operations and events and briefly on 7 July when taking my granddaughter back to Tarneit.

As a point of interest, the design manager for the shared path was David Barton of SMEC [ex Principal Road Design Engineer at VicRoads] and I spent much of the time with him on the first weekend. Geoff Bouilly who is a member of the VicRoads Western Projects team also visited the operation each day of that weekend.

You might think it odd that the first span on the western end is a bit long but if you possessed ground-penetrating vision you might see the many sensitive underground assets that prompted risk reduction by non-disturbance and extension of the structure. Note also that standard clearance had to be maintained over the disused railway line which once served the riverbank port facilities. It is just a pity that the new beams are already going rusty but the local "artists" will soon spring into action and paint it. This "weathering steel" is also being used on the new high-level footbridge crossing of Gardiners Creek at Deakin University in Burwood.

My thanks go to Damian Van Dyke for his assistance in provision of scheduling advice and David Barton who explained some of the mystifying design constraints.



The shared facility bridge five weeks after the construction of the beams



Robin Underwood

After reading the article about Towards Zero 2016 to 2020 in Newsletter 197, Robin read the full Strategy and Action Plan. He said that it is a very important document and his comments on it are set out below.

Victoria's Safety Strategy Action Plan 2016-2020 Towards Zero is a comprehensive document that sets out a number of strategies and actions to reduce the road toll over the five year period 2016 to 2020. The aim is to reduce the number of road fatalities to 200 or less by 2020 and to reduce the number of serious injuries by 15 percent over the same period.

The lowest annual number of road deaths in Victoria was 243 in 2013. Since then it has risen each year to 291 in 2016. For the first part of this year up to early September the number of road fatalities was just under 15 percent less than for the corresponding time last year (173 deaths compared with 202 last year). If this 15 percent reduction could be maintained for the period from now to the end of 2020 the number of deaths in 2020 would be close to 150 - well below the 2020 target, but realistically this is unlikely to be achieved. In fact, a reduction of 15 percent for the remainder of this year and a 10 percent reduction for each of the next three years would result in about 180 deaths in 2020, which is a little below the 2020 target.

On page 9 of the document it is stated that Towards Zero is a fresh approach with three guiding truths at its core, namely we all make mistakes but no one should die because of them, our bodies can only withstand so much road crash force before being seriously injured or killed, and everyone shares the responsibility of making our roads safer. In fact, this approach is similar to the one adopted in the 1997 Swedish Vision Zero, which fundamentally said that it is not acceptable that people are killed or seriously injured by road crashes. A similar approach was adopted in the 2002 Netherlands concept of Sustainable Safety. Again, the Australian National Road Safety Strategy 2001-2010 said among other things that "The priority given to road safety should reflect the high value that the community places on the preservation of life and the prevention of serious injury". Victorian road safety strategies since Arrive Alive 2002- 2007 have also expressed similar sentiments and have proposed a number of initiatives to reduce road deaths and serious injury.

While Towards Zero is hardly a fresh approach, it does update earlier State strategies and proposes new initiatives, thus building significantly on earlier Victorian road safety strategies. It should be strongly supported. If the strategies and actions in Towards Zero are vigorously pursued, the target of 200 deaths or less in 2020 might be achieved, although I suspect it might turn out to be a little optimistic because of the steadily increasing State population and numbers of motor vehicles on the roads.

As mentioned in my Item in the August 2017 Newsletter (No 190), a disproportionate number of road deaths occur on rural roads and many of these involve single vehicles running off the road. Many sections of rural roads are either unsealed or have narrow sealed pavements and minimal shoulders, and a blanket speed limit of 100km/h is quite inappropriate on them. Consideration should be given to a maximum speed limit of 80 km/h, (or even a little less), on these roads. In this respect, a reduced maximum speed from 100 km/h to 80 km/h would increase the travel time per km of travel from 36 to 45 seconds for vehicles travelling at the speed limit (a difference of 9 seconds per km of travel, or 90 seconds for a 10 km trip), and would reduce the impact of a crash for a vehicle travelling at the speed limit by about 36% to about 64 %.

If this suggestion were to be considered, it could be implemented simply by:

- changing the default speed-limit outside urban areas from 100 km/h to 80 km/h in Rule 25(3) of the Road Safety Road Rules, and
- checking to ensure that all higher volume sealed rural roads (particularly State Highways and Main Roads) of appropriate geometric standard are signposted as having a 100 km/h limit (and it is likely that most, if not all, are already so signed).

The change to the definition of the default speed-limit outside urban areas would require effective education and positive publicity programs to explain the change and reasons for it, and appropriate signing facing traffic entering the State at the significant State border crossings.

Pat Meehan

Pat wrote to Jim Webber recently to change his postal address but added the following note.

I hope that you are well and enjoying your retirement. It has been a long time since we have met or talked. Unfortunately I have not been able to get to any of the Retirees Association functions due to my heavy involvement in cricket administration with Cricket Victoria, the Victorian Metropolitan Cricket Union and the Ringwood and District Cricket Association – all voluntary roles. I am now finally fully retired with my last roles being Project Manager for the planning, design and construction of the new State Basketball Centre and Knox Regional Soccer Centre in Wantirna and Cricket Victoria's Local Government Consultant.



Norm Butler

The stories keep rolling in about Joe Gwizdek. Norm Butler was moved to write some of his recollections about Joe as follows:

"With the recent passing of Joe Gwizdek, the CRB/RCA/VicRoads lost one of its all time legends. Unlike so many of us, well retired, Joe was still in there doing his bit for VicRoads at the age of 74.

I first met Joe, when as a newly graduated Engineer he arrived at the Bairnsdale Country Roads Board Office. Joe soon made his mark. He was given the job of demolishing Toms Creek Bridge on the Princes Highway between Stratford and Bairnsdale with Bridge Overseer Brownie Paton. Between the two of them they decided to remove the old timber piles by drilling down beside the pile, placing plenty of gelignite then blowing it out of the ground. The scheme worked well. The pile was ejected from the ground like a rocket, did a couple of turns in the air then landed on, and destroyed, the main overhead telephone lines to Bairnsdale, Bruthen, Orbost and beyond. A legend was born.

Joe was based in Bairnsdale for the next 30 years, with a stint in Nepal on International work and in later years ranging across the larger Eastern Victoria Region of VicRoads. He was also a respected member of the CRB Army Reserve Engineers rising to the rank of Major. Joe retired from VicRoads in the late 90s and worked with a private contractor then with the Shire of East Gippsland before coming back to VicRoads a few years later and spending the last 10 years or so based again in Bairnsdale

All who knew Joe, also knew what a great raconteur he was. He had the ability to keep a room in laughter. He had a fund of stories about what happened in the CRB Bairnsdale Division in particular and had a prodigious memory for names and events. He like to play the joker, but underneath was also a very serious person – as any contractor or miscreant soon found out

Joe was a true Engineer in the sense of being ingenious as you will soon find out. Here are a few of the "Joe" stories.


Pythagoras. Every so often, when referring to Bridge Division, Joe would refer to "Pythagoras". After some investigation, this turned out to be the Team who used to turn up to investigate new bridge proposals. Bruce Addis (Class 5 Engineer). Brian Kemp (Class 4 Engineer) and Graeme Walter (Class 3 Engineer). As anyone knows, a triangle with sides in the proportion of 3-4-5 is a right-angled triangle. Right-angled triangles are the basis of the theories of the Ancient Greek mathematician Pythagoras. Of course, for ever after, the Bridge Inspection team was known as "Pythagoras."

Boranges. With the coming of the VicRoads Regions and the Regional Management Teams, Joe was exposed to the intricacies of the Regional Accounting reports, which were accrual accounts, incorporating both actual on-ground expenditure, plus cost of works done but not yet paid for, plus Head Office and other oncosts. Joe felt that the items rolled together were really incompatible - just like mixing Bananas and Oranges – and he coined the term "Boranges". From then on, anything which seemed not quite right in the accounts reports got termed "Boranges", much to the annoyance of Regional Accountant Phil Downey.

Alpine Road Seal Extension. (This was in the days before the road became the Great Alpine Road) There had been continuing complaints from Snow tourists about the Alpine Road at Sharps Hill being either too corrugated in summer or too sloppy in the winter, so Joe obtained Regional Approval (with funding) to grade up the surface and seal it (just 1km length). Along with Overseer Ted Schaeche they set to work with a will. The job went so well, that they found that they could extend the seal as far at Horsehair Plain – another 5 km. Obviously, it was better to ask for forgiveness than permission in this case. This is still part of the Great Alpine Road. A problem solved.

Big Sister. The Bairnsdale Roads Office was combined with the Bairnsdale R & L office with the advent of VicRoads. Joe looked at the male dominated Roads Office and the mainly female R & L Office and dubbed them "The Brothers" and "The Sisters" respectively. Bev Dunstan, the R & L Manager became "Big Sister" from then on, complete with a special numberplate made from chopped up pieces of old plates.

Cann Spans. In the 70s, a major flood in the Cann River damaged the existing concrete bridge to the extent that it was totally replaced with longer spans. The old bridge deck was cut into sections and stacked in the Cann River Caravan Park and soon vanished under a mass of blackberries. In the 1990s with funds very limited, Joe worked out to how to use these units to replace old and decrepit timber bridges on the remote areas between Bonang and Gelantipy. When a problem timber bridge came up for maintenance, Joe, with a lot of ingenuity both in an engineering and also in an accounting perspective, replaced 5 timber bridges – and "Pythagoras" never knew it had happened.



Press Ganged Bar Flys. A continual problem for the Region was the upkeep of Orrs Creek Bridge on the Dargo Rd. Money was allocated for heavy maintenance/rehabilitation and Joe found that for less money he could buy enough crown section culverts (about 2.5m x 3.0m each) and completely replace the bridge. The work was done by small quotes. The concreter was due one morning to cast the floor slab that would support the crown sections. About 9 a.m. the concreter rang Joe to say that he could not get there due to a serious accident. Unfortunately, the concrete had left the Bairnsdale plant and would be on site shortly. Not to be beaten, Joe raced to Dargo and rounded up men from the Pub to come and help. By midday the job was complete and everyone had had an enjoyable morning. Orrs Creek bridge had been replaced and the ongoing problem had been solved.

Steaming Roadworks. As happens sometimes, pavement under construction for the passing lane works at Providence Ponds on the Princes Highway had become saturated and with winter approaching there was a major problem in getting the work finished. Joe's unconventional answer to the problem was to bring in the stabilizing machine and mix quicklime directly into the wet gravel. With a lot of hissing and spitting the water was taken up by the quicklime. Passing through the jobsite in the late afternoon the road was still steaming away quite happily. The pavement went down very well and the job finished on time – with a much better pavement than originally planned.

There are many stories about Joe's exploits - these are only a few. Perhaps these few stories will bring some more "Joe-isms" out of the woodwork

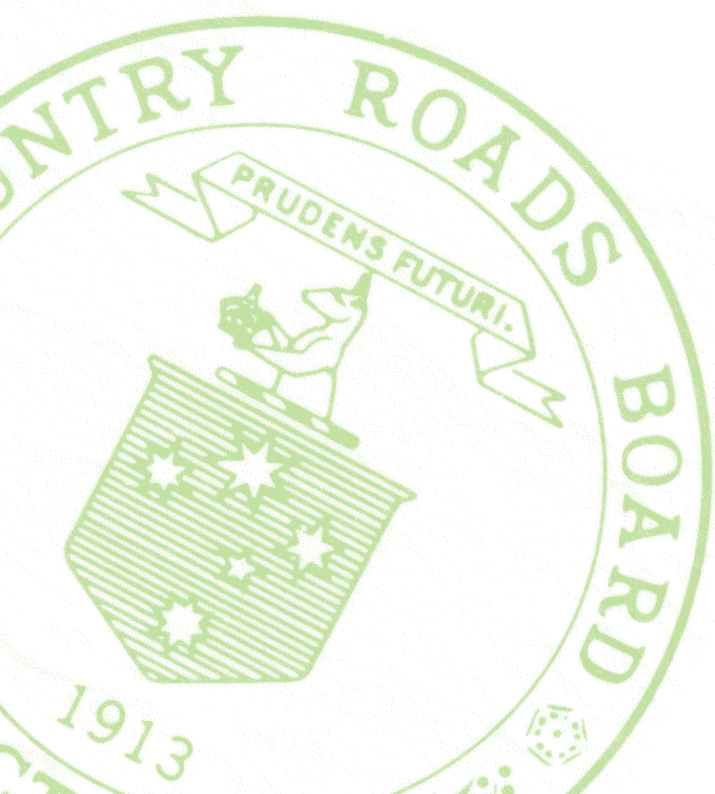
John Rebbechi

John was recently on a road trip in East Gippsland and he came across a gem of a bridge at Ambyne. The bridge was built in 1935 to enable vehicles to cross the Deddick River to the remote settlement at Ambyne. Ambyne is near the conjunction of the Deddick River with the Snowy River quite close to the more famous bridge – McKillop's Bridge.

The bridge is listed on the Victorian Heritage Register and the statement of significance reads:

"The Ambyne Bridge is historically and scientifically significant at the State level. Opened in 1935, it is a unique surviving example of a Country Roads Board suspension bridge constructed for vehicular traffic. It is one of only two surviving Victorian examples of suspension bridges constructed for vehicular traffic, and its interesting combination of suspension and truss main span and simple-beam approach span is unique in Victoria. It modifies traditional colonial pedestrian suspension-bridge design to suit motor-vehicle use, by a clever use of Pratt-type through-trusses to provide essential rigidity and stability. This bridge belongs to the period of pioneering closer settlement in north-eastern Gippsland, having been expressly constructed to service settlers at the recently-created Ambyne Settlement.

Its mode of construction, and the nature of material used, were largely determined by the historic flood that hit the Snowy River watershed in 1934, destroying large and important river bridges at Orbost and at McKillop's Crossing. Steel and timber from a temporary suspension bridge erected on the Princes Highway at Orbost, and from the wreckage of the original McKillop's Bridge, were "recycled" in the Ambyne Bridge. Persistent floods had rendered the previous ford at the site untenable, and the debris-strewn mountain torrent necessitated a long-spanned high-level structure. The bridge's high-country setting on a mountain stream adjacent to the picturesque and historic McKillop's track tourist route, enhance its intrinsic aesthetic qualities."





TRIVIA AND DIDACTIC WHIMSIES

This photograph was taken in 1970 but I don't know what the occasion was. Can anyone enlighten me? Looking at the personnel, it must have been something to do with road design. Can anyone name the missing identity?



Left to right: Bob Morrison, Les Kovacs, Andrew Noble, ??, Harry Townley, Neil Guerin, Mac Wilkinson, Robin Underwood and Max McPherson.

Changeover to decimal currency

Decimal currency was introduced to Australia in 1966 and the changeover occurred in the Country Roads Board on 14th February 1966. I remember my mother thinking she would never be able to cope. To her something worth two shillings and ten pence halfpenny was a lot easier to imagine than something worth twenty nine cents. I think it took her about two days to master it.

But in 1965, the Board developed a 30-page manual providing general information and instructions on the change to decimal currency. It was issued so that the staff could familiarize themselves with the new system for their own benefit as well as the Board. Training courses were held at all levels of financial management – Divisional accountants and cost clerks. In fact leave of absence was limited during January - March leading up to the changeover to ensure that there was sufficient personnel on duty at that time.

All financial transactions and records by the banks, after 14th February, were in decimal currency only but the old currency of pounds, shillings and pence remained legal tender, alongside dollars and cents, for a period of two years. During the transition period, shops could operate in either currency.

Although it seems amusing today, the manual included such basic information as the symbol for the dollar – explaining that there is no symbol for the cent. It stated that the symbol c will be encountered but it shall not be used within the CRB. It also emphasized that a hyphen should be used between dollars and cents and not a dot; but later used dots in various examples. I think this is now sorted out. When writing cheques 'and' should not be inserted between dollars and cents - a maxim I have never employed – and the word 'cents' should not be abbreviated. It also states the amounts written in words on cheques should be written as follows:

- Twenty nine dollars 26
- Twenty nine dollars 09
- Twenty six cents

Arrangements were being made for the conversion of CRB machines. Where necessary, a dollar symbol was to be added to the keyboard of the Board's typewriters and the lower case 'c' was to be used for the cent symbol. There were tables at the back for conversion, and test exercises. There were also photographs of all the coins at actual size; 1c = 1.2d, 2c = 2.4d, 5c = 6d, 10c = 1/-, 20c = 2/-, and 50c = 5/- but there were no photographs of the notes. There were blow up photographs of the new coins identifying the animals thereon – feathertail glider, frilled lizard, echidna, lyrebird, platypus and coat of arms. A new effigy of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth appeared on the obverse (head) side of all the new coins. The one dollar coin and the two dollar coins, introduced later have kangaroo and an aboriginal elder.

The original decimal coins were designed by Stuart Devlin who also achieved fame by teaching my wife at Teacher's College and for playing tennis against Ted Barton.

I hope you have enjoyed this little nostalgic ramble. It all seems so silly now. A short while ago, I gave a lecture to the University of the Third Age on the construction of the bridges across the Snowy River flood plain at Orbost – and it reminded me of how things were before metrication. Metrication of measurements occurred later and I represented the CRB on the metrication of the pre-stressed concrete design code. It was a very complex process because it wasn't as simple as just converting imperial units into their metric equivalents. All the various formulae and load factors involved in developing the code affected the final outcome.

However getting back to the Snowy River project, the design of the three bridges had been completed in imperial units and when it was time to call tenders, after the changeover to metrics, it was decided to build the project using imperial measurements. This was the last project undertaken by the CRB in imperial units. However it wasn't plain sailing. The concrete industry had completely metricated and the Board's site laboratory – which was NATA registered – was fully metric. So all the concrete was measured in cubic metres and strengths tested using megapascal (MPa) rather than pounds per square inch (psi). When I was preparing the presentation I found it to be very confusing mixing all this up. Thank goodness I was young when we built the bridges - and we paid the contractors in dollars and cents!



A few obvious signs that prove humans are regressing





Quick Thinking

An elderly man bought a sports car to recapture his youth and he drove it at excessive speed. Then he saw a police car behind him, blue light flashing, and he pulled over. The policeman said, "Sir, my shift ends in ten minutes. If you can give me a good reason why you were speeding, I'll let you go."

The old man thought for a while and said, "Years ago my wife ran away with a policeman. I thought you were bringing her back." "That'll do" said the policeman.

