

March 2021



# VicRoads Association

## Newsletter No.222



Princes Bridge, 1884

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. Cost of membership is a once only fee of \$50. Enquiries about membership or receipt of the Newsletter by e-mail should be directed to the Secretary, VicRoads Association, PO Box 80, Kew 3101 or by phone or e-mail as shown in the footer below. Visit our website at [vicroadsassociation.org](http://vicroadsassociation.org)

### Dear Members,

I have recently completed a story about all the CRB men who served in both World Wars. I was guided by the names on the Rolls of Honour which are located in the foyer of head office.

The names on the First World War roll are for all those that enlisted and for the Second World War, all those that perished. I have added to that list, men who worked at the CRB who joined after their war service, and I have added a few others whose war was served for other countries – such as Peter Kozeill (Polish Air Force in Britain) and Erwin Matzner (prisoner of the Nazis) in Croatia.

Most of us walked through the door of Head Office with scarcely a glance at the names of these men and yet they all had a story to tell more terrifying than anything we can imagine. Their names meant nothing to us – twenty of them never returned to tell their own stories and now they are names on a largely anonymous plaque, hidden on an anonymous wall and now beyond our memory. With this story, our memory of them will last a little longer, recalled in a spirit of pride, gratitude and comradeship. Even though we didn't know most of them, it is important that they are remembered in the tradition of Anzac and because they were workmates.

Each story is unique but their shared experience binds them together as only soldiers would know.

I propose to distribute it in April to commemorate Anzac Day and the entire newsletter will be devoted to them. It is pretty long (at 57 typed pages) and I may have to negotiate with the Department of Transport about its design and postage.

I want it to be a catalyst for a more comprehensive story. You may be able to suggest to me others that I have failed to mention or you may be able to provide additional information. And I don't want to restrict it to the two world wars. There may be some who served in Korea or Vietnam and I would like to add them to the story.

As you will see, I was unable to find any information in the public domain about some who are listed and there are a few in my mind who served but I could find nothing about them. One was Ray Jardine, who was a senior draftsman in Bridge Branch, and another was R.E.V. Donaldson who was Chairman of the Board. So, I would be most grateful if, after I publish it, you could provide additional information, so that I can expand the history.

David Jellie

## Program for 2021

The Committee has been considering a program of activities for 2021 and we agreed that there was little chance of any site visits/briefings with VicRoads and other departments – so we have put them on hold until 2022. However, we have agreed that the following functions can be held in accordance with any future Government requirements.

### Occasional Lunches at Shoppingtown Hotel, 12 noon.

- Monday 19 April
- Monday 21 June
- Monday 9 August
- Monday 11 October
- Monday 8 November
- Monday 7 February 2022

Please let Kelvin York know on 9438 1028 if you propose to attend.

### Dinners at Glen Waverley RSL, 6.00pm

- Thursday 13 May
- Thursday 7 October

Ken Vickery is our contact for these functions.

## Program for 2021 continued

### **Golf Day at Green Acres Golf Club – Friday 7 May 2021 at 12 noon**

Our annual golf day will be at Green Acres Golf Club starting at noon.

Please contact Jim Webber on 9817 4182 or 0412 064 527 or jimwebber@optusnet.com.au if you want to come along. Partners and friends are very welcome.

### **Regional Visit, October 2021**

We were scheduled to visit Warrnambool last year and we think that it would be a good destination for this year. Instead of being away for two nights we could stretch it out to three. Being from the district, I could lead the group to a few secret places that might please the eye or the palate.

If you are interested in such a trip, please let me know and I can start planning. The visit is planned for October – dates to be determined. Apart from visiting the local office, I expect that we will take in sites of interest in Colac and district and Warrnambool/Port Fairy.

### **Australian Botanic Gardens at Cranbourne, November 2021**

We propose a visit in November 2021 – date to be determined. We can arrange a tour and have lunch at the venue.

So there we have it! We will keep you posted. In the meantime, I hope I can put out a few more newsletters than usual to keep in touch with you – and don't forget I'd love to hear from you on any topic.

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## VALE

We extend our sympathies to families and friends of the following colleagues.

### **Garry Titheridge**

I have previously informed you of Garry's death but his wife, Roberta wrote to me with some additional details. This is what she wrote:

*'Garry passed away on 13th Sept, aged 79yrs. After completing a year of law at Melbourne University he decided to revert to civil engineering. He studied at the School of Mines and Industries in Ballarat and graduated in 1965. His first job was at the Ballarat Shire under Rex Hollioak, and after a few years he gained his certificate of Municipal Engineering.*

*He then joined the CRB and worked in the Ballarat Regional office for many years under Frank O'Brian. He worked in various positions and in 1992 he completed an Executive Development Program in Business & Quality Management Systems at R.M.I.T.*

*In 1994 we moved to Point Lonsdale to live. Garry had taken a position at VicRoads office in Geelong but, after a few years, he was forced to retire due to ill health. After a long recovery he re-energised his passion for golf, fishing and travel (in Australia and overseas) but, most of all, he loved his family.'*

### **Phil Roscoe**

Phil was not a member of our Association but many of you will remember him as the Legal Officer back in the 70s and 80s. Phil had a penchant for exotic cars, one of which was a Jowett Javelin – I think the only one I have ever seen. I also recall him driving one of those large, regal English cars, like a Bentley or even a Rolls Royce. Please don't hesitate to correct me on this. Phil was an intelligent and affable person and I suspect he helped a lot of members of staff with a bit of legal advice here and there. Phil was 74.

### **David Livermore**

David passed away on 28 February 2021. He had a long career in the CRB, RCA and VicRoads. He worked in Property Management, and later progressed to Property Enquiries working with Bill McDonald. He was known for his general knowledge of detail on a disparate range of subjects - cathedrals with the highest steeples, detail on how jet engines work, and lots more obscure facts.

## News from our Members

### Max Ervin

Max wrote as follows:

#### Hi David

I have been remiss in not contacting you sooner. I very much enjoyed reading your "The Intrepid Adventures of British and French Explorers in the Pacific". Both Pru, my wife, and I have an interest in the maritime history of Australia. We have a collection of books in particular in respect to Cook, Flinders and Baudin. Back in 2003, we sailed a leg of the Matthew Flinders re-enactment voyage on the "Winward Bound (Hobart), from Albany to Esperance. Pretty interesting stuff. It was a very expensive working holiday – Pru and I hardly saw each other, as we were on different shifts, and slept in different quarters!

But that is not the reason I am getting in touch. In my working life I spent a fair amount of time in the Pacific, and also became interested in some of the history there. A couple of books I found fascinating included "We the Navigators" by David Lewis, in which he explores the ancient arts of navigation used by the early Pacific boatmen. Another one, more recently published, is "Seda People" by Christina Thompson which addresses the puzzle of how Polynesia became populated. I thought if you had not read these you might find them interesting.

A couple of other books which you might also like are "The Ship that Never Was" by Adam Courtney which relates the true story of the escape of the last boatbuilders in Macquarie Harbour, and also "King of the Australian Coast", by Marsden Horden, documenting the travels of Phillip Parker King in "The Mermaid". King charted much of the northern coastline of Australia, which Flinders had to abandon after "The Investigator" became seriously weakened by Teredo Worm.

Anyway, just a few thoughts, and an opportunity to say thank you for your continued efforts with the VicRoads Association. I never have made it to a meeting, but very much enjoy the newsletters and reading about folk I once worked with. I also enjoyed Nick Szwed's Zoom presentation on Belarus.

Best regards, Max

### Max Lay

Max wrote:



Congratulations on another interesting and very readable VicRoads Newsletter, and on your two books. They prompted me to let you and all my ex-colleagues at VicRoads know that, in conjunction with my old ARRB workmates, John Metcalf and Kieran Sharp, I have just written a book called Paving Our Ways which is an international history of road pavements. Much has been written about bridge history but almost nothing about pavement history. So we have filled the gap. We think we have told a good story and the book has just been published in England by CRC Press, the technical publishing arm of the international publishing house, Taylor and Francis. I would be grateful if you would bring it to the attention of all the closet pavement experts amongst the Association's members.

Paving Our Ways provides a comprehensive international history of the world's pavements, running from the earliest human settlements to the present day. It is written for general and technically oriented readers, tracing the human and social aspects of pavement development and use, and providing detailed technical background. It also caters to students of engineering and transport wishing to broaden their knowledge of their profession or taking a course in the history and sociology of engineering. It is the only book at this level on this everyday topic. The book is comprehensively illustrated, referenced and indexed.

To purchase the book, please visit:  
[www.crcpress.com/9780367520786](http://www.crcpress.com/9780367520786)

PS. I am a great fan of Michael Leunig and I was delighted when he let us use one of his cartoons as the frontispiece illustration in the book. It's a great street cartoon so I thought I should share it with you.

## John Wright

John wrote this personal message to me at Christmas but I am sure he won't mind me sharing it with you as it has a lot of interesting news. He wrote:

### Hi David

We wish you a very happy Christmas and certainly a much better New Year than the one we are happily almost done with. We both enjoyed your personal recollections of Christmas at Colac, which brought back lots of happy childhood memories for us too. David, you have done a wonderful job of putting together so many great editions of the Newsletter, and your efforts are always greatly appreciated. It is the social glue that stitches us all together.

Rosslyn and I have missed our regular get-togethers at Kew and elsewhere and look forward to a more socially inclusive 2021. In particular I have had to cancel – or at least postpone a major celebration for my 80th birthday in May. We will try for a reprise this coming May.

Earlier in March this year (2020), Rosslyn and I were holidaying in New Zealand and had just finished touring the North Island and were about to head off to the South Island when Jacinda Ardern pulled the plug on all tourism and we had to fly home to Melbourne. We were fortunate in several aspects. Scenic arranged temporary accommodation for us in Wellington until we could board a flight, and afterwards they refunded the unused portion of our tour costs. Many Australians touring overseas were not so lucky, being stranded for months and being stiffed for their unused holiday costs. Arriving at an almost deserted Tullamarine and being greeted by staff completely clad in PPE was a very weird experience. We have never cleared immigration and customs so quickly.

You may remember Bob Pearson, who used to be in the vehicle permit section and later left the CRB to form his own very successful consultancy. I recently heard from Bob, who is living in sunny Port Macquarie. Bob has had some medical adventures with prostate cancer, but like many others with this condition, including Rob McQuillen, is soldiering on.

I have had some medical adventures. Late last year I was holidaying in Redcliffe, Qld, with Rosslyn and we were returning from dinner when I started coughing up blood. Not a good end to a night out at a great Greek restaurant. Back in Melbourne, a CAT scan revealed the bleeding was caused by a fungus that was inhabiting some scarring in my left lung. After a bronchoscopy and a lung washout I had a further operation under an angiogram in which a catheter was inserted into an artery in my groin and guided up my aorta into my chest area. I was necessarily conscious when this was happening because I had to stop breathing when instructed.

The surgeon told me he was going to inject nano particles in the small artery supplying the area that was bleeding, to create a local embolism that would stop the bleeding. He also warned me that the aorta offtake for that small artery was not far from another one supplying part of my spine, and that if he picked the wrong one, I would permanently lose control of my legs. I was very happy when he eventually asked me to move my leg – and I was able to do so. As it turned out, these operations were ultimately unsuccessful because the fungus (*Aspergilla*) had not been flushed out. I later had a further operation in April in which the top 15% of my left lung was surgically removed to get rid of the fungus. So far, I have had no further problems.

With best wishes

John and Rosslyn

## Noel Osborne

Noel enjoys travelling to exotic places and he describes below a weekend in June 2019 when he travelled from Famagusta in Cyprus to Baku in Azerbaijan.

### Saturday June 2019

It will be a long day today with travel in nine stages – from my Hotel, Altun Tabya, in Famagusta in Northern Cyprus to Baku, Azerbaijan. I am traveling from the end of one tour to the start of another and I have worked out that it will take 36 hours.

I was woken at 4.00am by a group of noisy Turkish clerics who were leaving the hotel with lots of door banging and talking. I gave up trying to sleep at 4.30am so got up, packed, and had a cold shower thanks to the clerics draining the hot water. I went down to reception to meet my transfer bus to Ercan. I was accompanied by a travel friend who was planning to catch the same flight as me to Istanbul. She had prepaid, \$70 Aust. for her transfer.

Houssen, the tour leader of the previous tour, ever the wheeler dealer, cadged a ride with a driver back to Kyrenia, and returned to the hotel with her private car to do all the shuttle runs to the airports. We collected our pre-packed breakfasts that the hotel staff had prepared, and carried our bags to the end of the narrow lane where Houssen was waiting. She loaded them into the boot of her car and, at 5.45am, we set off for Ercan International Airport. It is a 92km trip by public bus, but they don't start until 8.00am. By car, it is more direct, but is still 65km.

When we arrived at the airport, Houssen did not seek any payment from me saying it had been prepaid. Nevertheless I paid her a generous tip for both of us.

We entered the terminal at 6.20am, checked in our luggage and got our boarding passes before meeting up again just prior to the security screening. Unfortunately, my travel friend had been bounced off the flight and was stuck at

Ercan until later in the afternoon. She would still make her connecting flight to London but was not a happy lass. She was offered a Business Class upgrade as a sweetener.

I departed Ercan at 08.40 on a Turkish Airlines Airbus A321 and landed at the new Istanbul International Airport at 10.15am. The airport had only been open for a few weeks and was like a shiny pin. As soon as we landed I headed off to my connecting flight.

I changed my remaining Turkish currency into Euros. I tried to purchase some Azerbaijani Manat or Georgian Lari but they did not deal in either. I then headed to my departure gate for boarding at 12.50pm. This flight was also on a Turkish Airlines airbus with a flight time of two hours fifteen minutes to Tbilisi International Airport.

When I boarded I noticed the lady on my left had a Georgian passport. She spoke English and we chatted as we waited in the aircraft taxi area and during the take-off. Her name was Anna. She had spent two days in Istanbul on business and was returning to Tbilisi with her daughter, Yulia. Once we were airborne and at our cruise height, and the seat belt sign was switched off, she apologised and said she was going to join her daughter in a seat several rows back which meant I could have some extra room.

I had learned from Anna some useful information about Tbilisi and transport options from the airport into the railway station. We landed in Tbilisi at 3.30pm and I proceeded through passport control to the baggage carousel and waited for my checked in case to appear. It was checked in early from the previous flight so was almost the last to appear on the carousel. As I picked up my bag, I felt a touch on my shoulder and I turned to see Anna and Yulia who offered to drop me at the station.

This was both very kind and totally unexpected. "Are you sure it is not out of your way?" I enquired.

"No, it is practically on our way and the bus will take well over an hour to get there as it makes many stops and is not as direct. We know you have a train to catch. Come Please". Anna added that the bus would take 90 minutes at this time of day. I assumed they had arranged to be picked up but when we got outside they then flagged down a taxi and negotiated a price. It was a station wagon. "You sit in the



Anna and Yulia who offered me a lift to Tbilisi Railway Station.

front with your long legs" they insisted as we pulled out into traffic.

The taxi ride had taken an hour. They insisted that I should not pay any of the fare. As I said goodbye, I took a photo of my new Georgian friends.

I only had a few minutes before I was due to meet V----- and collect my train ticket to Baku.

I need to backtrack a bit at this point. I like to include travel by train in my tours and the overnight sleeper train from Tbilisi to Baku fitted into my travel schedule. Unfortunately, it was not possible to buy a ticket online through the internet. It had to be purchased in person. So, after a lot of research and one false start with a travel consultant, I came across a small private travel company in Tbilisi. We sent an email explaining what we wanted and received a reply within 20 minutes. This took us by surprise as the official contact took four days before coming back negative

This is how I was introduced to V--, who quoted me a price for a first class sleeper berth including her fee. I chose first class, because there were only two floor level beds and no upper bunks. As I was arriving on a Saturday, V--- had also agreed to buy the ticket and meet me at the railway station at 7.00pm and hand me the ticket in person with an hour to spare to get to the platform and train. The agreed meeting point was at Biblus bookshop on the third floor at 7.00pm.

I found my way up to the third floor and Biblus was quite easy to find. I then went up to a mezzanine floor cafeteria and found a stool from which I could watch the front of the bookstore, and also, by swivelling around watch the trains arriving below. V--- had a passport photo of me and I had told her I was two metres tall so she would be able to recognise me but I did not know what she looked like.

Ten minutes later I spotted a young woman who appeared to be looking for someone so I grabbed my bag and hurried down the escalator. As I approached her I saw that she had an athletic young fellow in tow. False alarm!

As I was about to head back up the escalator, I heard a voice "Mr O-----?" I turned and met V---- for the first time. We were both early. V--- arrived early as she was heading off on a date and she did look to be over-dressed just to hand over a ticket. She explained everything to me and I thanked her. It only took two minutes and she was gone

My ticket was printed in Georgian but she had also printed an English translation and highlighted on my English copy the important bits like carriage number, bed number, and timings.

I saw that the train had arrived so I went down to the platform but had to wait before we could board the train. Down on the platform with my luggage I took some photos of the train. The driver was adamant that I could not photograph him or the engine but I wandered away and, using a telephoto lens, I took a couple of shots for my collection. I boarded the train and easily found my cabin.

A few minutes later Emin – my cabin companion – arrived and introduced himself. Emin was a 40 year old Azerbaijani now living in Tbilisi. He showed me a photo of his family. He is the manager of a company in Tbilisi and was visiting

the Baku store for a week. He was a nice chap and we got along well together.

He asked where I was planning to travel and he gave me a lot of good advice on both Azerbaijan and Georgia. He was quite open about the political situation and gave me a good briefing on the current situation. I really enjoyed his



Noel with his Georgian travelling companion, Emin.

company and we talked together as we crossed out of Georgia and into Azerbaijan.

Crossing out of Georgia involved handing over our passports to the cabin supervisor and all had to leave the train to stand outside.

Fortunately the rain had stopped. I bought a can

of beer and talked with Emin as customs people inspected all the cabins, in and under the beds. The changed the train engine to an Azerbaijani diesel for the remainder of the trip. We then travelled a few 100 metres and our passports and visa were handed to an Azerbaijani Captain in dress uniform. We were then required to march in for an interrogation one on one and photographed. There was a pause while the information was run through their data base. My interrogator sat silently as did I. He then a few perfunctory questions for which I gave very short answers. He then waved me away and asked me to send the next one in.

It was 12.45am when our passports were returned, duly stamped, and the train got underway in Azerbaijan.

### Sunday June '19

Our cabin steward was a very solidly built Russian lady. She crashed into the cabin and gave us both a lecture in rapid Russian – with a demand for Emin to translate for the foreigner's benefit. Emin was used to these trips and soon fell asleep whereas I slept fitfully. I stood in the passage way in the first light of day until Madam pointed to my room and spoke gruffly to me. She had left a cup of tea in there.

By this stage we were in the outskirts of Baku. It was 8.00am and we were passing through what I assumed to be a pine plantation comprising trees of different species. I could see a thin arm of the Caspian Sea and river inlet. Emin pointed out the new Trump Tower under construction in Baku as we were pulling into the station.

I said my farewells to Emin. I thanked him for his help and his companionship and he, in turn, wished me good travelling. Emin had commented on his name "Muslim background, Russian stock" he said. The final stage of my journey was a two kilometre walk to my pre-booked Sahil Hotel. I found it using my Google map, which I had printed at home.



Baku Promenade on the shore of the Caspian Sea.

I had to walk as I had yet to obtain any local currency and it was a good orientation exercise. At least it was good until I arrived at the block where the hotel should be. But even as I walked the block three

times, I still could not find No.27. I had to ask directions. No luck. I asked again. Still no luck. I asked a third time and luckily this one was a taxi driver. "I take you". He walked three doors down and pointed. The shops are numbered 57, 59 and 27 next. I have to admit it did have a small sign above the doorway, if I looked up high enough, saying Sahil Hotel.

I walked through the archway and entered a scungy, grotty hole that the third world would be ashamed of. I climbed a chipped, dirty stairway smelling of urine and rotting garbage, and then ascended 59 steps to the first level. The wooden door was locked. I climbed another 28 steps to the second level. I saw a backpacker descending. "You should have taken the lift" he said and pointed down the stairway adding, "It's okay (meaning the Hotel) when you get there". I entered the reception through a glass door from the stairway landing. The hostel was neat, clean and very recently stripped bare and totally refurbished. I checked in, was given my key and found my room. It had a new bathroom and the furniture was clean and comfortable.

It was a long and complex journey from Famagusta to Baku but it was worth the effort.

### Peter McCullough

Peter sent me this copy of an article he found in The Frankston and Somerville Standard – 4th March 1921

The Country Roads Board has now-a-days the respect of the general community, but it was not always so.

When it first came into existence, 75 percent, of the shire councils opposed it. Today, 90 percent support it.

Evidently the remaining 10 percent are sleeping as soundly as ever.

Mr. Calder, the chairman, is naturally proud of the fact noted above. The Roads Board does certainly construct good roads, and has been responsible, to a large extent, for the development that has taken place of late in rural districts. Because of that, "The Standard" believes that the Country Roads Board has thoroughly justified its existence.

## Doug Mathews

You might remember my diatribe about the state of the world in the last newsletter (No. 221) where I wore my heart on my sleeve about such things as the reconstruction of the economy after COVID, climate change, privatisation of services, the rights of indigenous people, the imbalance of media ownership in Australia, and the role of social media in our lives. I also mentioned the American election, grandchildren, my books (now in the shops), travelling abroad, and going to the football and the theatre.

Well Doug Mathews has responded quite firmly as follows. I have made a few minor editorial changes.

### Dear David

I share many of your concerns mentioned although I place a different focus and emphasis on a number of issues raised in your commentary.

Yes, climate change and how to deal with it are close to the top of the list of concerns but nobody seems prepared to mention rapid and ongoing world population increase as a major contributing factor. The world's resources are finite but we as a human race seem intent on reproducing ourselves towards future extinction.

Likewise the development of nuclear power in Australia to provide a non-polluting cheap, reliable and abundant power source into the grid should surely be considered in the mix of alternative solutions but it is political poison to even mention this as a possible option.

My greatest fear however is China's quest for world domination. There are many examples in history of nations setting out on a course of militarism and following this path where disastrous consequences and human misery have resulted. If China loses patience and decides to invade Taiwan (and buoyed by its takeover of Hong Kong without international outrage and intervention), as a close ally of the US we will be drawn into the battle. China is already seeking to exert its influence in PNG on our northern doorstep which makes Australia increasingly vulnerable to military retribution by China should we "step out of line".

You mention about privatisation driving up costs to satisfy the profit motive. I would suggest that in a free enterprise mixed economy such as Australia generally speaking the private sector is the main driver of wealth through competition, invention, service to the public, productivity and growth with profit for excellence, efficiency and innovation acting as a motivational reward. By contrast there is a current explosion in public service numbers (with pay and conditions and superannuation surpassing most people working in small and medium privately owned businesses) both federally and in the States (particularly in Canberra, Queensland and Victoria). Unfortunately many good people employed in the Public Service become captive to a bureaucratic mindset whereby output, natural talent and

efficiency is curtailed by "hypothetical make work" projects that come to nothing together with excessive government legislation impositions with their prescriptive set of rules, regulations, legalese and task duplication.

You wear your heart on your sleeve with genuine compassion for the plight of many aboriginal communities and how their lives can be materially improved in terms of education, health, employment, reconciliation and cultural acceptance. It seems that many state and federal governments over the years have thrown money at the problem and tried to impose "Western type" solutions but whilst well intended, this has brought about minimal success.

You expressed disdain for Murdoch and the influence that he has through his media outlets. I have a different take and whilst recognising that his publications and media interests have a conservative or right wing bias, there needs to be a balance and pushback against many of the left leaning sentiments exhibited by the Canberra Press Gallery, the ABC, SBS, Channel 10, The Age, the Guardian, Crikey.com and some social media outlets.

In closing, there was a phrase you used "we migrant Australians" which as a proud native born and patriotic Australian, I feel is quite misplaced and somewhat demeaning.

This is the problem with identity politics. There is a tendency in some quarters to glorify aboriginal existence over 60,000 years whilst demonising white settlement and progress since 1788 whereby non-aboriginals are being made to feel like interlopers, hardly an approach to bring about a reconciliation.

If people who claim aboriginality - particularly educated people living in cities along the eastern seaboard - seek good will, genuine reconciliation and a respectful negotiation process for the betterment of aboriginal peoples - particularly those living in remote camps and desert settlements - then don't start your argument by questioning non-aboriginals' right to be here or that their land has been stolen. Don't assume aboriginal people have a monopoly over love of our country, and don't hit non-aboriginals with the history guilt stick or punch us on the nose with radical aggravation manifested in angry demonstrations led by a hard core of radical militants.

David, I suspect that you will regard some of my comments as ill-informed or perhaps aggravating but you did suggest you would be happy to have feedback to your newsletter so I felt compelled to put in my two bob's worth.

Best regards

Doug Mathews

*Suffice to say, I think Doug and I are, on some issues, poles apart but I feel honour-bound for him to state his case on these matters. His comments about China's quest for dominance may or may not be correct, but if you look at world history over the last two centuries you can't say that Britain or America were particularly passive in this regard.*

## News from Regional Roads Victoria (RRV)

Although this article did not originate from RRV, it is nonetheless, very relevant to rural roads. It appeared in the December issue of History News which is the newsletter of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria. It was written by Charles Sowerwine and the society has kindly given me permission to reproduce it here.

'Roadside trees are a much-loved aspect of Victoria's rural landscape and they often carry great historic significance. Awareness of the need to protect trees culturally significant to Indigenous peoples has been raised by the recent controversy over trees for the Western Highway Duplication and, indirectly, by Rio Tinto's appalling destruction of the Juukan Gorge rock shelters; you can see the RHSV submission to the parliamentary inquiry on this: <https://www.historyvictoria.org.au/rhsv-makes-a-submission-to-juukan-gorge-inquiry/>. We strongly support the right of Indigenous Australians to protect their heritage.

***It's time to go back to the drawing board and ensure that current and future road projects give sufficient weight to the trees along our roads that form such an important part of the Victorian rural landscape.***

In general, the trees which mark our roads should weigh more heavily in considering road projects, whether the trees be culturally significant to Indigenous Victorians or of social or historic value to non-Indigenous Victorians. The felling of trees for road projects has been and continues to be a major issue for the RHSV and for many of our local historical societies. Roadside trees often have historic significance. Some pre-date European settlement and may have served as landmarks before the roads were built. Others were planted by early settlers from an instinctive sense that tree-lined roads were appropriate. Still others were planted to form Avenues of Honour after World War I or to prepare for the 1956 Olympics.

Roadside trees help us to make sense of our landscape. Tree-lined roads identify our paths. They show us where the road is and affirm us as we drive, offering us shade and comfort. Across Victoria, they define our rural landscape.

We can all remember the pain we felt when roadside trees were lost. From Ararat and Beaufort to St Kilda Road, Melbourne, many have been felled, some at great cultural and historic cost. I myself was deeply pained by the felling in 2016 of the great Flemington Road Gum at the entrance to the Tullamarine Freeway. Many of us still mourn the loss of the great trees of St Kilda Road.

In the country, trees constitute a major feature of the rural landscape. The Buninyong and District Historical Society last year protested in vain against the planned removal of more than 400 trees to widen the Midland Highway. Many of these trees were very old growth Manna Gums, some planted to commemorate the 1956 Olympic Games. The Society argued that these trees were 'an essential part of the vista of Mount Buninyong'. They were part of a significant landscape overlay in the Ballarat Planning Scheme and formed an important wildlife corridor. The Society asked the Minister for Roads, Jaala Pulford, for consultation; but did not even receive the courtesy of an answer to their letter.

It's time to go back to the drawing board and ensure that current and future road projects give sufficient weight to the trees along our roads that form such an important part of the Victorian rural landscape. This is especially applicable to culturally and historically significant trees. Planting saplings as replacements is not sufficient compensation for either loss of heritage or loss of shade and wildlife habitat.

When we weigh up trees for road widening, are we thinking of the future? Most of our roadside trees were planted before cars and trucks became our dominant mode of transport. When our forebears built the railways, they assumed this was the future, but within two generations the motor car began to challenge the railways. My grandparents grew up walking or riding on carts and buggies. How will my grandchildren travel? Can we assume that our transport won't change again? In a period of rapid technological change, facing climate change and global pandemics, change is likely. Will our grandchildren still need cars and trucks? They will certainly need trees.

Roadside trees bear witness to our past. They give meaning to our rural landscape for all Victorians. We will need them long after we have found new ways to travel.'

VicRoads' latest Tree Policy was developed in 2016 and describes VicRoads' approach to managing trees within all road reserves under its responsibility. It complies with the Road Management Act (RMA) which requires VicRoads to ensure the safety of road users, protect the environment, protect the physical integrity of the road and infrastructure in the road reserve, and ensure the most efficient use of resources available for road management. The policy is available on the internet and I presume it is still operative under the RRV.



# News from Major Road Projects Victoria (MRP)

## Western Roads Upgrade

The Western Roads Upgrade is a \$1.8 billion investment to improve roads in Melbourne's western suburbs. It includes a 20-year maintenance contract which entails the ongoing care of 260 kms of road from Footscray to Werribee. It is scheduled to be completed this year.

The project is being delivered through a Public Private Partnership (PPP) between the Victorian Government and project consortium, Netflow. The roads will not be toll roads.

The various components of the project are shown in the map below.



## Frank Docking's Reminiscences

Frank was for many years the CRB's Divisional Engineer at Traralgon and later at Dandenong. I have mentioned him recently in the reminiscences of Ian Goldie in Newsletter 221. He established Traralgon Division. His daughter, Ruth, who lives in Canada, found these hand-written reminiscences in Frank's archives and passed them on to me. They were obviously written after his retirement during the time of the Road Construction Authority – thus dating them between 1983 and 1988.

### Frank wrote:

My career with the Country Roads Board began in February 1927 at the old Titles Office, with the impressive title of junior Engineering Assistant, but not so impressive salary of 35 shillings per week of 5 ½ days.

I was initiated into surveying by Bill Pascoe on approximately 35 miles of deviations on the Jamieson-Eildon Road for the construction of the Eildon Weir. The work lasted about 6 months, with one break at home at Easter.

A 'T' model Ford with a tray body was used to transport survey and camp gear and supplies. Sections of the old road were inundated, and a rough track had to be cut around the hill side to establish a camp at Big River. In wet weather the truck had the habit of sliding downhill, and had to be pushed back on to the track by the survey team. On the steeper slopes Mac Fisher, the driver, drove from the running board, ready to jump if in danger of capsizing.

Tents were erected on a frame of bush poles, bunks made with two chaff bags filled with straw or pine needles, slung on poles and kerosene boxes used for tables and chairs. In the winter we had the comfort of a fire in a corrugated iron enclosure at the entrance to the tent.

Wally was the cook, but had very bad eyesight, and sometimes strange ingredients turned up in the stew. One night the camp was awakened by the sound of rifle bullets exploding, to find that the cook's tent had disappeared in flames, and Wally was sitting up in bed with a very dazed expression. The string attaching his rifle to the ridge pole burned through and the rifle fell on his head. He seemed none the worse for wear from the experience except for a couple of black eyes. Rifle bullets in the pockets of his trousers near the fireplace exploded in the flames.

Standard equipment for a bush survey were a dumpy level, clinometer, prismatic compass, aneroid barometer, 100 foot steel chain, and a set of stamps for numbering pegs. We cut 2 inch by 2 inch by 8 inch pegs by felling a suitable tree, stripping the bark, sawing the trunk into 8 inch lengths with a crosscut saw and, and splitting and shaping pegs with a sharp axe – usually a job for Saturday morning, while two other members of the party rowed the boat 6 miles on the weir to Eildon for the week's provisions.

Bush stakes marked with an axe blaze were used to indicate the position of pegs, but prevailing heavy frosts during the winter months caused the sap seeping from the blazed stakes to freeze, and the ice had to be scraped away to



Frank Docking, Val Pye, Ron Angus and Stan Hodgson at Frank's retirement in 1974 at Dandenong Division

mark the chainages on the stakes. Frosts were so heavy that patches in the shaded areas of the river valley lasted all day. Some of the good work done by the survey party in arduous conditions later became obsolete when it was decided to enlarge the weir.

Experience in road and bridge design was gained at the Exhibition Building offices, where the highlights were the vigorous cricket matches, with tennis balls, in the small enclosure at the rear of the buildings, during lunch hour.

In 1933 I was despatched at short notice to Benalla Division to serve under Harold P. Wood. This proved to be a major factor, not only in the development of my professional career, but in domestic affairs as I met my wife, Dorothy, and raised a family of five.

At this time roadworks were still being carried out with primitive equipment. Earthworks were formed with horses and scoops, drawn graders, planers and drags. Side boards were set to line and level with boning rods and stringlines to define the edges of the pavement, the gravel spread by hand and shaped to camber with a template. Patrolmen worked with a horse and dray on a 10 mile section of road. The allowance for the horse depended on the price of chaff, which was shown on the wages sheet. Some bituminous surfacing was still done by hand, the tar or bitumen being applied by pouring pots, and screenings spread with shovels from heaps on the shoulder of the road.



Divisional Engineer H.P. Wood was a man of high ethical and professional standards. He usually accompanied the supervising engineer on final inspections of road and bridge works, when one watched with concern as he examined the work in detail for faults or departures from the specification. It was rather frustrating when after a long day of inspections he stopped to check the signs and lights on work in progress in the head lights of the car, while his passenger was feeling pangs of hunger. However, I appreciated the training.

Sections of the Hume Highway south of Benalla were constructed with Reef Hills gravel which contained a high percentage of fine material, and was dusty when dry, but was quite sound when compacted. The Highways Engineer

***On another job, he was supplied with a tin bath for the ablution block. George was quite insulted and exclaimed, 'What do I want that bloody thing for, I go home once a month!'***

visited the Division when work was in progress, and remarked to the Divisional Engineer "my word Harold, that boxing is very dusty". He was flabbergasted with the reply: "That is not the boxing. That is the pavement." It carried the highway traffic for many years after that.

At one stage, the engineers had to share a Triumph motor bike for transport. One frosty morning I parted company with the motorbike on a

curve at South Wangaratta. I sat on the wet pavement and slithered along the road. Apart from the embarrassment, there was no damage to man or machine.

George, the Bridge Overseer, was a rough diamond, but a bushman, expert in building good timber bridges. He camped on the job and did not worry about the primitive conditions. In order to improve matters, a new sanitary pan was despatched to the job, only to find on the next inspection that it was being used as a bread bin.

On another job, he was supplied with a tin bath for the ablution block. George was quite insulted and exclaimed, "What do I want that bloody thing for, I go home once a month!"

During the Depression years in the 1930s, government funds were provided for unemployment relief work on Mount Hotham Road. A camp was erected on the roadside, using bush poles, sawn timber, corrugated iron and hessian, the men being billeted in tents.

I had the task of surveying the section of road under construction during the day, and preparing plans for the overseer at night. Fortunately progress by manual labour was slow. Many of the men sent up from Melbourne were unfit or unaccustomed to manual labour, and only stayed



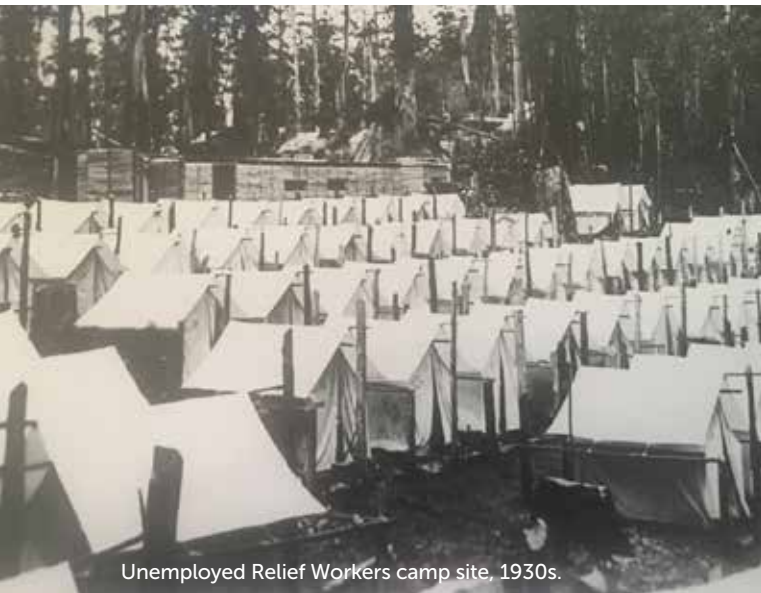
A horse and scoop at work on the South Gippsland Highway, 1930s.



A CRB 'Baby' patrol, 1930s.



Hand pouring bitumen on a macadam road, 1930s.



Unemployed Relief Workers camp site, 1930s.



'Smoko' in the camp. These men built our road system.

till pay day. Others hardened to the conditions and work progressed well. The presence of copperhead snakes enlivened operations.

During the Second World War I was seconded to the Board's Northern Territory Division based at Tennant Creek, under the supervision of Divisional Engineer R.C. Jones, to assist with the construction of a sealed pavement on the Stuart Highway between Larrimah and Alice Springs. The work entailed many hours of travelling on hot days in dusty conditions, on the alert for kangaroos bouncing across the road, and occasionally alarmed by the sound of the rubber tyre tread lifting from the tyre in the heat, and slapping the mudguard. Much of my time was occupied in going bush, to locate sources of suitable gravel and sand in dry creek beds to supply the Barber Greene mixer, which turned out about 1,000 tons of bituminous asphalt a day to cover 2 or 3 miles of pavement. I enjoyed the experience in spite of the heat, dust and flies, getting the car bogged in dry sand or stranded after rain.

In 1950 my transfer from Benalla to Traralgon as Divisional Engineer was quite a circus, with 5 children, a portable sleep out, miscellaneous gear, and a cow in a trailer towed by the Stock Inspector. All went well until the Haunted Hills at Yallourn, when the cow became restless, and by the time we reached Morwell in the rain, she was most obstreperous. I had to get into the trailer, hold her head to keep her on her feet, and in this fashion the new Divisional Engineer arrived at Traralgon. Fortunately it was dusk!

Ten acres of flat land had been acquired for a depot, the only improvements being several prefabricated Housing Commission houses recently erected for staff, and a galvanised iron shed to serve as an office. In the course of time, the area was drained, surfaced, planted with lawns and trees, and with the addition of a workshop, storeroom and other facilities proved quite serviceable for the small Divisional staff.

Urgent roadworks were necessary as the recent rail strike required the cartage of coal and briquettes from Yallourn by road, resulting in extensive pavement failures on the Moe Swamp Section of the Princes Highway East. Large areas of wet subgrade had to be excavated and replaced by rock rubble. On one inspection as I approached Yarragon I noticed what appeared to be a hat moving along the pavement, only to find on getting closer that it belonged to a driver on the bulldozer in the excavation.

1951 was a year of wet weather and floods causing washouts and landslides blocking roads and disrupting traffic. Extensive damage occurred at Walhalla, when Stringers Creek burst its banks. Fortunately Tom Russell was Assistant Divisional Engineer, who with his typical energy and ability took charge of the workmen, directing and demonstrating the necessary repairs to have the road quickly open for traffic.



I was fortunate in having a very capable and loyal office and outdoor staff on construction and maintenance works, who took pride in their work. I only remember one occasion when I had to reprimand an overseer about the standard of work. I got out of my car to register my displeasure, lost my cool, and on returning to my car found myself in the back seat. The laugh was on me as I sheepishly moved to the driver's seat.

On my appointment as Dandenong Divisional Engineer in 1968, I had difficulty adapting to urban requirements for road and bridge works, with new techniques in planning, design and construction of freeways. Once again I had an excellent support team. In recalling some of the more amusing incidents, I also remember the reconstruction of the road system over many years, and any contribution I may have made, thanks to the co-operation of colleagues, staff, construction and maintenance workers who had been involved.

As I travel around in retirement, I am impressed by the major improvements now being undertaken by the Road Construction Authority.

So that was Frank's story. I worked for a short time in Dandenong Division when Frank was the Divisional Engineer. Although I had only a few occasions to meet him, I was impressed by his wisdom. I could also see that he engendered a great loyalty in his staff.

I think his decency emerges from his reminisces and as I transcribed them I couldn't stop thinking about how soft our lot has been. No graduate engineer today would ever stoop to join a survey party living rough in the bush with a half-blind cook and copperhead snakes for company. And yet Frank obviously enjoyed it and learnt from it. Frank's ADE at Dandenong was Stan Hodgson – again one of the most honest and decent of men. I wrote about Stan's reminisces a few newsletters ago and they described similar tribulations. You may remember that Stan was given a bike, as supervising engineer on the Kiewa Valley Highway, to supervise the construction of bridges over a 20 mile length of the highway.

The State of Victoria owes a lot to these blokes!

## From the archives

### Princes Bridge – 1884

The Princes Bridge shown here was built in 1850 and was made out of bluestone and granite. Its span was the largest in the colonies at the time – 150 feet (not quite 50 metres) long and 30 feet wide. It replaced Balbirnie's wooden toll

bridge built in 1845. This was a small, low to the water bridge and just like its successor, crossed the river on an angle. This photo was taken on the south side of the river near the location of the current Princes Bridge.



## And now for something beautiful

In this issue, I want to talk about some of the most beautiful buildings I have seen. As with all things of beauty, each individual has their own values as to what is beautiful and you might disagree.

I remember back in 1964, Pam and I travelled to Spain with two friends, Ron Haig and Ken McNaughton. We had decided to spend six weeks in Spain and we hired a Morris 1100 in England and packed our camping gear. As we sped southward through the French countryside we saw in the distance, looming over the fields of wheat, the towers of Chartres Cathedral. Without consulting Pam, we three men resolved that we would await our return journey before we went to Chartres. Pam was crestfallen and so we decided to detour to Chartres and it was one of the most uplifting days of my life. The stained glass windows were more dazzling than words can convey and every one told a story. I have returned there about six times and every visit inspires me. Once, Pam and I stayed two days to listen to lectures given by Malcolm Miller. Miller, an Englishman, first went to Chartres as a student and stayed for over 50 years as the cathedral's most noted scholar. He has been decorated twice by the French government for his services.

I saw this cathedral at an impressionable time in my life. I was young, newlywed, optimistic, free of any responsibility and experiencing international travel for the first time. And then I saw images like these.



The roof design was inspired the engineering of airfoils but some describe it as a nun's coif.

The following year, we went on our grand tour of Europe in a left-hand drive VW Beetle which I bought in Munich for about fifty quid. Among hundreds of beautiful buildings we saw was the Colline Notre Dame du Haut at Ronchamp in Eastern France, not far from the Swiss border. We sought it out deliberately

because we had read so much about its architect, Le Corbusier. We felt we knew it from photographs we had studied over about five years. But the reality was different. We had incorrectly imagined it to be a large building rather than the intimate building it is. It is one of the world's most recognized building – probably due to its fluid form – and it is designed perfectly for the site on which it is located.

Its thick walls are punctured by small windows that project shafts of light in a random pattern, giving an impression of peace and intimacy.

I propose to describe a few more beautiful buildings in Newsletter 224.



The Parable of the Good Samaritan



The Life of Charlemagne



It is a place of extreme spirituality no matter what your beliefs are.

# Trivia and didactic whimsies

## An American in Australia

David Mason is a Professor of English and Creative Writing at The Colorado College and is the former poet laureate of Colorado, although he now lives in Tasmania. He is married to an Australian poet, Cally Conan-Davies.



David thinks there is a lot to admire about Australia, especially if you're a visiting American. Here is his modest take on living in Australia.

### Health care

I know there are controversies, but basic national health care is a gift. In America, medical expenses are a leading cause of bankruptcy. The drug companies dominate politics and advertising. Obama was being crucified for taking halting baby steps towards sanity. You can't turn on the telly in America without hours of drug advertisements - something I have never yet seen here.

And your emphasis on prevention - making cigarettes less accessible, for one - is a great model.

### Food

Yes, we have great food in America too, especially in the big cities. But your bread is less sweet, your lamb is cheaper, and your supermarket vegetables and fruits are fresher than ours.

Too often in my country, America, an apple is a ball of pulp as big as your face. The dainty Pink Lady apples of Oz are the juiciest I've had. And don't get me started on coffee. In American small towns, it tastes like water flavoured with burnt dirt, but the smallest shop in the smallest town in Australia can make a first-rate latte. I love your ubiquitous bakeries, and your hot-cross buns. Shall I go on?

### Language

How do you do it? The rhyming slang and Aboriginal place names are like magic spells. Words that seem vaguely English yet also resemble an argot from another planet. I love the way institutional names get turned into diminutives - Vinnie's and Salvos - and absolutely nothing's sacred.

Everything is an opportunity for word games and everyone has a nickname. Lingo makes the world go round. It's the spontaneous wit of the people that tickles me most.

Late one night at a barbie my new mate Suds remarked: "Nothing's the same since 24-7." Amen to that.

### Free-to-air TV.

In Oz, you buy a TV, plug it in and watch some of the best programming I've ever seen - uncensored. In America, you can't get diddly-squat without paying a cable or satellite company heavy fees. In Oz a few channels make it hard to choose. In America, you've got 400 channels and nothing to watch.

### Small shops

Outside the big cities in America, corporations have nearly erased them. Identical malls with identical restaurants serving inferior food. Except for geography, it's hard to tell one American town from another.

The "take-away" culture here in Australia is wonderful. The human encounters are real - people love to stir, and stories get told. The curries here are to die for.

And you don't have to tip!

### Free camping

We used to have this too, and I guess it's still free when you backpack miles away from the roads. But I love the fact that in Oz everyone owns the shoreline and in many places you can pull up a camper van and stare at the sea for weeks.

I love the "primitive" and independent camp-grounds, the life out-of-doors. The few idiots who leave their stubbies and rubbish behind in these pristine places ought to be transported in chains to the penal colonies.

### Religion

In America, it's everywhere - especially where it's not supposed to be, like politics. I imagine you have your Pharisees too, making a big public show of devotion, but I have yet to meet one here.

### Roads

Peak hour aside, I've found travel on your roads pure heaven. My country's "freeways" are crowded, crumbling, insanely knotted with looping overpasses - it's like racing homicidal maniacs on fraying spaghetti!

I've driven the Hume Highway without stress, and I love the Princes Highway when it's two lanes. Ninety minutes south of Bateman's Bay I was sorry to see one billboard for a McDonald's. It's blocking a lovely paddock view. Someone should remove that MacDonald's Billboard.

### Real multiculturalism

I know there are tensions, just like anywhere else, but I love the distinctiveness of your communities and the way you publicly acknowledge the Aboriginal past. Recently, too, I spent quality time with the Melbourne Greeks, and was gratified both by their devotion to their own great language and culture and their openness to an Afghan lunch.

### Fewer guns

You had Port Arthur in 1996 and got real in response. America replicates such massacres several times a year and nothing changes. Why? Our religion of individual rights

makes the good of the community an impossible dream. Instead of mateship we have "It's mine and nobody else's". We talk a great game about freedom, but too often live in fear.

There's more to say - your kaleidoscopic birds, your perfumed bush in springtime, your vast beaches. These are just a few of the blessings that make Australia a rarity. Of course, it's not paradise - nowhere is - but I love it here. No need to wave flags like the Americans, and add to the world's windiness.

Just value what you have here in Australia and don't give it away.

### A Shaggy Dog Story

During the current COVID pandemic, the people in Cairo have been somewhat traumatised by the silence and are missing all of the usual noise and cacophony on the streets. Some are becoming ill as a result of this. In an attempt to resolve the problem, the Egyptian Government has asked that everybody goes out between 6 and 7 pm every night and drive around in their cars blasting their horns as loudly as possible. It's hoped that the familiar sounds will induce a return to tranquillity and normality. This is known as the "Toot 'n Calm 'Em" method!

### American History

A friend at my art studio, Derek Skues, sent me this message which I thought I would share with you.

'I am currently reading "The Storm before the Calm" by George Friedman about the history of America (USA), how it got to where it is now and what's next. He demonstrates that Presidents are only a symptom of community values, not the cause.

Clearly, the Civil War still is a fundamental driver of the current divide in attitudes. I was unaware that 655,000 were killed during this conflict compared with 405,000 in the Second World War, 58,200 in the Vietnam War and 36,000 in the Korean War.

The other fact of which I was unaware is that America only just won the War of Independence (6,800 killed) because the British forces were otherwise engaged fighting the French. In fact, James Cook undertook the navigation of the St Lawrence Seaway in his 30s for the British Navy in order that they could attack the French at Quebec City.

I've still to find out when things will improve in the US.  
Derek'