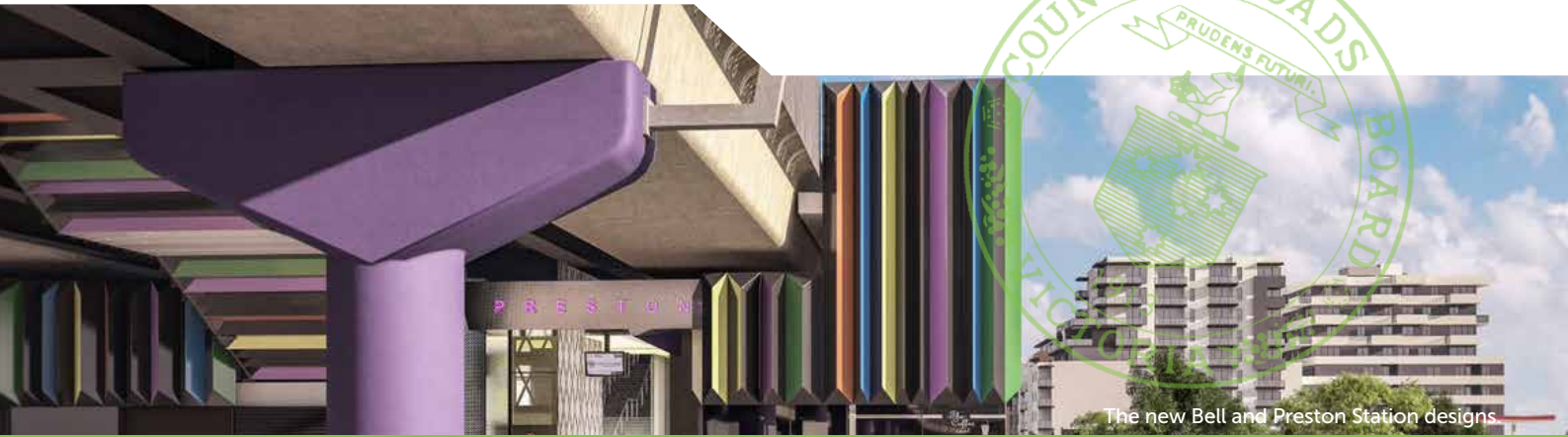


VicRoads Association

Newsletter No. 226



The new Bell and Preston Station designs

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

Dear Members,

We have had our first committee meeting since last April. We welcomed two new committee members – Iris Whittaker and Jill Earnshaw. We still have a vacancy on the committee so if anyone wants to put up their hand, they would be most welcome.

The main item on the agenda was planning for our trip to Warrnambool region in October. Although not fully finalised, broad details of the trip are provided later in the newsletter.

Our program for this year remains unchanged – as outlined below – and we approved the membership of the new members named below.

We followed the meeting with lunch at Shoppingtown Hotel. The numbers were slightly down but that was to be expected because of the short notice. Provided everything goes well with COVID we hope to see a better attendance on 9 August.

Nick Szwed also reported on the number of visits we have had on our website. We have averaged about 20 visits per week but it is interesting to note that some of those come from abroad. People from Belgium, United States, China, United Kingdom, Spain, Canada Brazil, Panama and Sweden have visited our site in descending order of frequency.

Another innovation we are going to try is for members to post reviews on the website. This came about recently when Jim Webber recently saw a film which he thought deserved some rotten tomatoes thrown at the screen. We thought it might be interesting if members posted their own reviews – good or bad or middling. The reviews could be of a film, a book, a concert, a musical, a play, an opera or ballet, an exhibition or anything else that takes your fancy. They shouldn't be too long – say a maximum of 300 words – and we might even print some of them in the newsletter. We could call it something like Skyrockets or Fizzers. If you want to participate send your review to Nick Szwed at nszwed@bigpond.net.au and to me at the address given in the footer.

David Jellie, *Chairman and Editor*

Vicroads Association 7th Annual Golf Day

The Golf Day was held at Green Acres Golf Club, Kew on Friday 14 May 2021. Jim Webber provided the following report:

After the day was abandoned in 2020 due to the Covid19 pandemic, we resumed in 2021 with 7 VicRoads Association members (just short of our maximum of 9 in 2018) and 8 Green Acres members. We were very fortunate that, apart from a very light shower, the rain held off for the day.

This year's winner was Roy Gilmour (34 points), followed by Jim Webber (31) and Noel Ransome (28). The other members who played were John Ford, Doug Thompson, Neil Tull and Howard Hughes.

Roy was a previous winner in 2018. He was presented with the perpetual trophy by GTV9 personality and Green Acres member Pete Smith.

The best of the Green Acres members was Graham Dickson (33), closely followed by Colin Cust (32) and Irving Lenton (30). Others who played were Lance Rimes, Robert Levin, Vic West, Pete Smith and Kelly Masters.



The tentative date for our Golf Day in 2022 is 1st April, the first Friday in April.

Pete Smith presenting the trophy to Roy. Pete is the one on television.

What's coming up

Occasional Lunches at Shoppingtown Hotel, 12 noon.

Monday 11 October

Monday 8 November

Monday 7 February 2022

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

Dinner at Glen Waverley RSL, 6.00 pm

Thursday 7 October

Please put this in your diary and I will remind you about details closer to the date.

Regional visit to Warrnambool and the Western District, October 2021

Please note that I put the wrong dates in the last newsletter. We are planning this trip for the 12, 13 and 14 of October. A rough outline of the trip is as follows:

Tuesday, October 13th

- Meet at Winchelsea and then drive to Beac for lunch at the Farmers Arms Hotel.
- Drive to Alvie to visit Red Rock volcano.
- Drive to Camperdown for overnight stay. Visit botanical gardens, Mt Leura Lookout and Lakes Bullen Merri and Gnotuk.
- Dinner at Leura Hotel.

Wednesday, October 14th

- Drive to Warrnambool for briefing at Regional Roads Victoria on local road and transport issues.
- Drive to Koroit for lunch.
- Drive to Port Fairy via lookout at Tower Hill

- Sightseeing at Port Fairy and return to overnight accommodation at Warrnambool
- Dinner at Lady Bay Hotel.

Thursday, October 15th

- Local activities in Warrnambool then depart at 11.30am for lunch at Lakeside Café on Lake Purrumbete.
- Leave for final destinations.

This is an outline plan and details will be confirmed later.

I know that some people – Bill, Gary and Graham – they know who I mean – have confirmed but I think it might be best if you all reconfirm again so that I can get a firm idea of final numbers. This also means the committee members too. Once I know, I can finalise arrangements, especially for the Camperdown accommodation where I hope to get a group discount. I can then liaise directly with the group to fine tune the trip.

My contact details are: pdjellie@hotmail.com or 0418 105 276.

Royal Australian Botanic Gardens at Cranbourne Monday 15 November 2021

We have arranged to have a one-hour guided bus tour of the Gardens. One tour leaves at 11am, the second at 12 noon. The cost of the tour is \$16.50 per person. Lunch is available (at own cost) at the Boon Wurrung Café after your tour. You can also visit the Gardens without going on the bus tour.

There is a limit on numbers. Let Jim Webber know if you wish to book a place on a bus tour- jimwebber@optusnet.com.au or 0412 064527.

Partners and friends are welcome. Also advise whether you prefer 11am or 12noon for the tour.

New members

I am delighted to welcome the following new members to the Association: Malcolm Sanders, Laurie Watson, Richard Anderson and Margaret Best.

I want to thank those members who have encouraged others to join – namely Norma Jones, Paul Tucker and Peter Hassett.

There are others who have expressed interest in joining but have not submitted their applications, or who have expressed interest but not followed up. These include Sarah Morrison, Brigit Cramphorn, Annie Del Monte, Lloyd Rowe, Russell Smith, Bill Hooker, Bruno Aleksic, Hugh O'Brien, Tom Barber, Griff Davis, Mike Butler, Allan Bowman and Helen Teder. If any of these people wish to join, please contact our Secretary, Jim Webber, on jimwebber@optusnet.com.au

VALE

I am sorry to report the recent death of the wives of two of our members – **Gillian Clark** (wife of John) and **Diane Ford** (wife of Bruce). Both have attended our functions in the past and they were two lovely ladies.

On behalf of the association I extend our sympathies.

News from members

Mike Kennedy

Mike is not a member but he follows our news via the newsletter and he wrote to me about his memories of Jeff Briggs.

Hi David,

Enjoy catching up through your work on the VicRoads Association newsletter, but was sorry to hear of Jeff's recent death.

I worked with Jeff on and off from around 1991 to his retirement in 2006. I heartily endorse others' memories of Jeff's (and Lyn's) contribution to office life and entertainment in Regional Services and RSM/Asset Management over that period. He was always fun (and a bit of a rebel) so that made him good company around the place.

I ran with him in the '80s a few times when the lunch runners used the Materials Division change rooms (where we had showers), and later when we both worked together at Camberwell, though he'd taken up 'speed walking' by then.

He was a great supporter of the occasional office lunch at Bivios or La Porchetta in Kew, or even an office 'happy hour' late on a Friday in the 90s. As I lived fairly close to Kew (as I still do) these were opportune times for me as I didn't need to drive home!

My final job at VicRoads was in RSM/Asset Management from 2000 -10, and there were Jeff and Lyn again, both providing a mainstay to the management of the department.

Though saddened by the news, I only have good memories of Jeff - he was one of the good guys.

*Cheers,
Mike Kennedy*

Continued...

News from members

Lance Midgley

Lance rang me last week and it was great to catch up on his news. The surgery on his hands has not worked as well as hoped but they are still doing work on them. He is quite mobile in his wheelchair. He catches public transport without assistance and has even been to a footy match unaided.

After our chat he wrote to me as follows.

David

In the latter part of my time with VicRoads and the following years since my retirement in 2010, my wife and I became Grey Nomads travelling around Australia. Over the journey, we came across many sites that we really enjoyed, some of which we were unaware of and only found them by chance.

I suspect that there are other Grey Nomads within the VicRoads Retirees Association that do or could get great enjoyment travelling around Australia, discovering its hidden treasures particularly as overseas travel has been off limits and problematic in the future.

So, I was wondering if my compatriot and potential Grey Nomads would be interested in what I have experienced "out there" and most likely what I have missed.

Attached is my list of Australian Sites to Visit. The list mostly does not require a 4 Wheel Drive vehicle to get to these places although I'm sure there are some I have not experienced and are therefore not included such as the Gibb River Roads up in the Kimberley.

It would be great if the list of sites could be added to without going overboard. I have tried to keep away from tourist attractions in the cities as they can be Googled separately.

If people would like to send me other sites of special interest so a more comprehensive list can be prepared, I would be happy to receive their suggestions.

Regards Lance

My contact details are:

Lance Midgley

Mob: 0407 103 424

Email: lancemidgley@bigpond.com

And this is Lance's list.

Australian Sites for Visiting

New South Wales

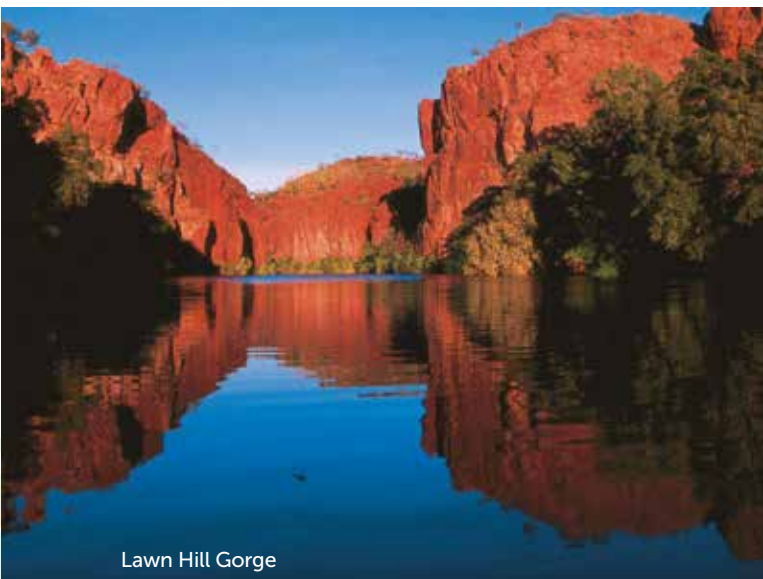
1. Don Bradman Museum – Bowral
2. Kangaroo Valley drive – Between Moss Vale and Nowra
3. Cowra – Japanese Garden and Prisoner of War Camp
4. Slim Dusty Museum – South Kempsey
5. Pub with no Beer – Taylors Arms (approx. 30km West of Macksville)
6. Bustard Head Lighthouse – 14km West of Agnes Water (LARC Tour)
7. Tenterfield Historic Town – Sir Henry Parkes on Australian Federation 1899
8. Lake Mungo Dry Lake – 60km north-east of Mildura (Dirt Road)
9. Broken Hill – Ken Done Art Gallery
10. Silverton – 20 minutes west of Broken Hill (Mad Max film)
11. Lightning Ridge – Opal Mining town



Bustard Head Lighthouse, made using prefabricated segments of cast iron bolted together.

Queensland

12. Cairns – Trip to Kuranda via Chair Lift (going up) and Scenic Railway (coming back)
13. Great Barrier Reef – suggest helicopter (out) and Sea Ferry (back) – Depart Port Douglas or Cairns.
14. Cooktown:
 - Captain Cook's Museum
 - Lions Den Hotel – 30km drive south of Cooktown.
15. The Tip – Camp at Punsand Bay (850 5km north of Cooktown - 4WD)
16. Undara Tubes – Savannah Way, Mt Surprise
17. Roma Tourist attractions – Big Bottle Tree, Big Rig Night Show, Saleyards, etc.
18. Barcaldine – Tree of Knowledge & Australian Workers Heritage Centre
19. Longreach – Qantas Museum and Stockman's Hall of Fame



Lawn Hill Gorge

- 20. Winton – Red Dirt Tour
- 21. Lawn Hill – Stay at Adels Grove
- 22. Birdsville – Visit when the Races are held (August?)

Northern Territory

- 23. Ayres Rock/Uluru and the Olgas – approx. 450km south-west of Alice Springs
- 24. Kings Canyon – 320km south-west of Alice Springs
- 25. Standley Chasm – 50km west of Alice Springs plus other sites (Serpentine Gorge)
- 26. Finke Desert Race (bikes, cars, buggies & quads) – near Alice Springs
- 27. Devils Marbles – 100km south of Tennant Creek
- 28. Cape Crawford (380km north of Barkly Homestead). View Lost City by Helicopter – Stay at Heartbreak Hotel
- 29. Daly Waters Pub – Just north of Stuart & Carpentaria Highways intersection
- 30. Mataranka Thermal Pool – 12 km north-east of Stuart/ Roper Highway I/section
- 31. Katherine Gorge boat trip – 30km east of Katherine
- 32. Mindil Beach – Darwin (Thursday Nights)
- 33. Litchfield National Park – 100km south-west of Darwin. Visit Buley Rockhole, Tolmer Falls, Wangi Falls. Stay at Outback Resort - Batchelor
- 34. Kakadu – 300km east of Darwin (many attractions)
- 35. Victoria River Cruise – Join at Timber Creek (300km west of Katherine)

Western Australia

- 36. Kununurra – Cruise Ord River/Lake Argyle plus other attractions, e.g. Hoochery
- 37. Bungle Bungles sandstone formations – book a fly/ drive tour from Kununurra.
- 38. Fly over the Mitchell Plateau – 250km north-west of Kununurra
- 39. Geikie Gorge – 20km north-east of Fitzroy Crossing
- 40. Tunnel Creek & Windjana Gorge – Suggest book tour departing Derby (big day)
- 41. Derby – Experience 10m tide change
- 42. Broome:
 - Sunset at Cable Beach – Drive onto the beach and pick your spot.
 - Horizontal Falls via Seaplane (suggest stay overnight if operating)
 - Dinosaur Footprints Tour via Hovercraft
 - Cape Leveque (Pearl Tour) & Beagle Bay (Aboriginal Community)
 - Whale Watching
 - Malcolm Douglas Crocodile farm tour
 - Camel Ride, Cable Beach
 - “Staircase to the Moon” View from Town Beach
 - Play golf, memorable course.
 - Movie at the Open-air theatre
- 43. Tom Price Mine tour
- 44. Ningaloo Reef – Coral Bay
- 45. Monkey Mia – 25km north-east of Denham
- 46. The Pinnacles – near the town of Cervantes, 200km north of Perth
- 47. Albany – ANZAC museum on troopships departing Australia for 1st world war.
- 48. Tallest Trees – Near Pemberton
- 49. Wave Rock – near Hyden
- 50. Cape Leeuwin Lighthouse – km south of Augusta
- 51. The Super Pit – Kalgoorlie

South Australia

- 52. Whale Watching – Head of the Bight - 290km west of Ceduna.
- 53. Lake MacDonnell Salt Lake – 15km south of Penong
- 54. Barossa Valley Wine region – Possible stay at Tanunda
- 55. Coober Pedy – Opal Mining town



News from members

56. **Wilpena Pound** – Flinders Ranges
57. **Lake Ayre** – Possible flight from Wilpena Pond or William Creek
58. **Historic mining town of Burra** – 120km north-west of Renmark
59. **The Pink Lake** – Princes Highway between Taillem Bend & Meningie
60. **The Australian Farmer (Granite Sculpture)** – Wudinna (260km west of Port Augusta on Eyre Highway)
61. **Seafood Feast** – Robe
62. **Murray River exit into the Southern Ocean at Coorong**, 10 km east of Goolwa

Victoria

63. **The Grampians Pinnacle Lookout** – Halls Gap (70km south of Horsham)
64. **12 Apostles & other Features** – Great Ocean Road between Torquay & Allansford
65. **Silo Art** – Generally between Goroke and Patchewollock, Western Victoria
66. **Ballarat:**
 - Sovereign Hill (Historic Gold Mining village)
 - Eureka Stockade – Southern Cross flag & story of Miners Rebellion.
 - Botanical Gardens incl. Prime Ministers busts and Ex P.O.W. Memorial
 - Walk around Lake Wendouree – approx. 6km
67. **Penguin Parade** – Phillip Island (12km from Cowes)
68. **Healesville Wildlife Sanctuary**
69. **Murray River Road Trail** – Albury to Wentworth (Sites, Food, Golf, Wine, Cruises)

70. **MCG** – Melbourne (Australian Sports Museum)
71. **Bendigo Historic Attractions:**
 - Art Gallery
 - Central Deborah Mine tour
 - Golden Dragon Museum
 - Bendigo Pottery
72. **Bonegilla Migrant Centre** – 14 km east of Wodonga

Tasmania

73. **Cataract Gorge** – Launceston
74. **Cradle Mountain / Lake St. Clair National Park** – 150 km south-west of Launceston
75. **Franklin River Cruise** – Strahan
76. **Salamanca Place** – Hobart
77. **MONA** – Museum of Old and Art Gallery – Hobart
78. **Port Arthur Historic Site** – 95km south-east of Hobart
79. **Freycinet National Park** – 190km north-east of Hobart
80. **Oldest Bridge in Australia** – Richmond (27km north-east of Hobart)

ACT - Canberra

81. **Parliament House**
82. **Australian War Museum**
83. **National Library of Australia**
84. **National Art Gallery of Australia**

If you can add to the list, let Lance Know. With Lance's assistance, I will write about some of these places in future newsletters. I think it is a great idea.

Judith Byrne

I received the following letter from Judith.

Hello David

My name is Judith Byrne, daughter of 'Paddy' Byrne who was the workshop foreman in Bairnsdale, after being transferred from Traralgon in 1959. After his death in 1993 my mother continued receiving and enjoying the CRB/ Vic Roads news. Unfortunately she passed away last year in her 99th year.

As we continued receiving your interesting newsletter I was always amazed at how many names came up from the East Gippsland area, from after the war and beyond. Andy Wilson, was an example, from being an overseer to a doorman at the Windsor Hotel, after enduring the Burma Railway.



The mouth of the Murray at Goolwa.

The CRB was a huge part of our lives. From the Bairnsdale area teams of highly committed workers built and repaired roads and bridges to the NSW border, kept the Paynesville/Raymond Island ferry afloat, dealt with floods and fire, along with maintaining snow free roads at Mt Hotham. I remember visiting Fred Ward, the snow plough driver with his dog 'Snowball', at Dinner Plain.

Calls would come in 24/7 as the workshop phone was switched through to the house after hours and Paddy was always at the ready to respond to a situation. During the day every call to the workshop came through our home phone, so my mother always knew how busy Bill Hall was in the office.

A career highlight was accompanying Bob Gooch to Indonesia through the Colombo Plan, where they lived in very basic accommodation in the jungle on the island of Flores. Dad recalled finding human skulls as they were excavating. Along with working on the Bali airport and visiting Java and Sumba their time away made for fascinating letters in the 60s. I wonder if the Byrne Street sign still survives in Flores today? We hosted many Indonesian engineering students after Dad's return in 1967.

Names that I remember are Frank Docking, Joe Gwizdek, Bill Dolamore, Bob Baade, Ted Schaeche, Wally Dyll, Bruce Grayling, Bryan James, Geoff Downey, Pat Doyle, Max Golding and Leo Russell, who always made a regular Christmas phone call to us. Names from Traralgon were Tom Russell, Ian Goldie, Hayden Brayshaw and Doug Watts. We had great holidays at 'The Prom', in a CRB hut at Tidal River.

Paddy loved repairing old machinery and was very generous with his time fixing friend's cars and farm machinery in the Bairnsdale area.

In later years my mother's eyes would light up hearing familiar names in articles that I would read to her. When I had to finally succumb to putting her into care, at one stage three out of four ladies at her table had husbands or sons who had worked at the CRB.

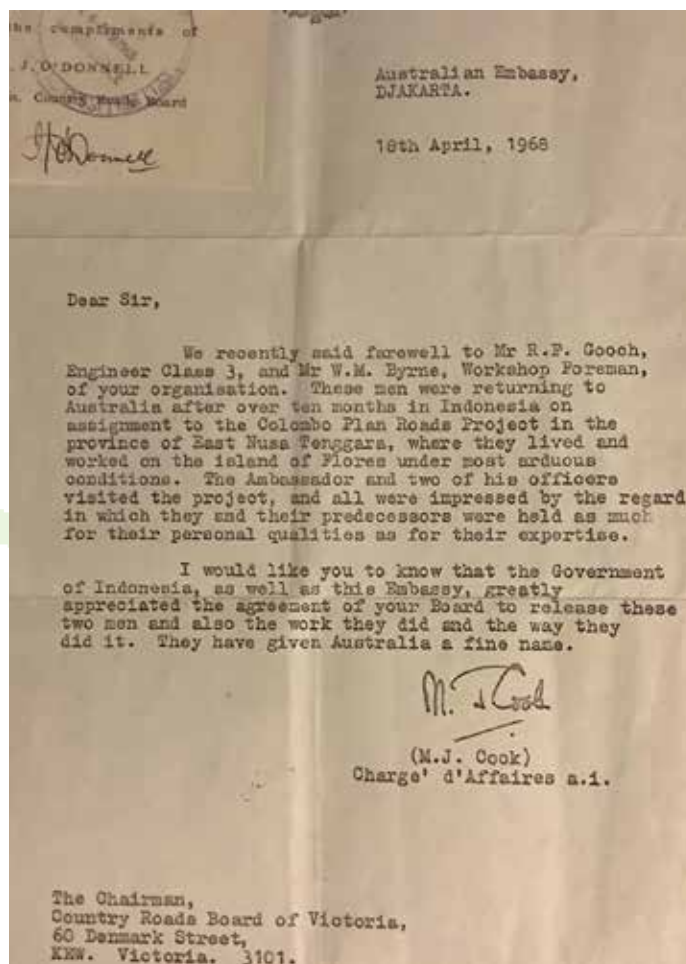
I commend you on the fascinating articles, jokes, trivia and didactic whimsies that you have presented over many years. It has made for very stimulating reading.

Now I shall 'get up to speed' and save the snail mail by reading online.

Thanking you for your great effort of keeping the past alive in such an interesting format and informing us of proposed projects.

Judith

I was thrilled to receive this note from Judith as it illustrates – more than I can ever describe – the camaraderie that existed in the people of the CRB towns like Bairnsdale and Traralgon.



Paddy at his farewell presentation being congratulated by Chairman, Tom Russell.

Transport news

Progress on Level Crossing Removal in Melbourne

The Government has recently announced the imminent elimination of four level crossings in Melbourne's northern suburbs – under the Preston Level Crossing Removal Project.



The new Bell and Preston Station designs.
Artist impression only. Subject to change.

The level crossings at Oakover Road, Bell Street, Cramer Street and Murray Road in Preston will be gone by the end of 2022, with new stations at Bell and Preston and significant new open space under the rail bridge available to the community to enjoy in 2023. The Bell Street crossing currently carries more vehicles than any other level crossing in Melbourne.

It is estimated that the project will benefit more than 82,000 motorists who pass through these level crossings on the Mernda line every day – with the boom gates down for up to 40 per cent of the morning peak. On completion, Bell Street – one of Melbourne's busiest arterial roads – will be level crossing free.

During construction, disruptions to train services on the Mernda line will be minimal, with the rail line not closing for more than 12 consecutive days at a time – ensuring

trains can continue to access the Epping train maintenance facility, which is critical for the smooth running of the wider rail network.



The two new stations at Bell and Preston will rejuvenate the station precincts for locals and create safer and more direct links between public transport, local shops and parking.

In south-east Melbourne work is ramping up on the Pakenham line, with major construction underway to remove level crossings in Dandenong, Hallam, and Berwick. Work is also underway on the removal of three more sets of boom gates at Pakenham – where new stations will also be built at Pakenham and Pakenham East.

Construction on the Cranbourne Line Upgrade is making great progress, with work underway to duplicate eight kilometres of track between Dandenong and Cranbourne, removing the last four remaining level crossings between Cranbourne and the city, and building a new station at Merinda Park in Lyndhurst.

All in all, work is on schedule to remove 75 level crossings by 2025.

LEST WE FORGET



I am totally immersed in preparing many more stories about people who have worked in VicRoads and its predecessors who gave wartime service to their countries. My aim is to publish it as a book which I have tentatively named *Roads to War*. So far I have found people who gave service to Australia, Britain and Germany. There are some truly amazing stories among them as well as tragic ones.

As I progress, I propose to place my draft on our web page so that you can all access it on our website at vicroadsassociation.org. I propose to upload it every couple of months.

If you haven't got a computer, get one of your grandchildren to print it off for you. Keep in mind it is a draft and some entries just have notes to prompt my research. I would greatly appreciate your comments. If you have any suggestions or additional information or, Heaven forbid, if I am wrong, please let me know. The same applies if you know people I might have overlooked.

I have had great support from many members suggesting names and providing additional names. I called to see Stan Hodgson last week and he gave me many names and he followed it up with a call last Sunday to provide many more. We had a bit of fun together and I am happy to say that Stan is still full of wit and generosity of spirit. By his own admission he is small of stature. He was a champion footballer and he said that Tom Russell always described him as a 'nippy, little left-footer'. When I met Stan, he put his arm around me and looked up at me and said "David – you would have been a wonderful ruckman". We both had a good giggle. I propose to write a little bit more on Stan in the next newsletter.

Bill Thomas also rang me and gave me a list of names – mainly about field staff in Benalla Division when Bill worked up there. Bill too sounds in good spirits and still retains that wonderful sense of humour that we all loved.

Over our last lunch at Shoppingtown Hotel, Ted Barton provided me with another list, Noel Anderson has given me names and I intend to call and see him again soon.

I won't tell him that my main incentive is to have some of Margaret's delicious brownie!

Other suggestions have come from Peter Hosking, Tom Glazebrook, Barry Atkinson, Peter McCullough, Kelvin York, Norm Butler, Brian Kemp, John Rebecchi, Ray Brindle, Bill Sagers, and John Clark.

My thanks go to all of them and if I have missed someone out, I apologise.

I have also had great assistance from relatives of some of the people I have written about. Jim Webber researched his uncle, Bob Webber. Warren Butcher provided information about his father, Jack. Norm Bettess assisted me about his father-in-law, Jim Drayton. Annette Cooper wrote a wonderful story about her father as a commando in New Guinea and I have recently received the story below about Jack Ross, written by his daughter, Janet Macloy. I have slightly edited it because of space restrictions. I propose to use an abridged version for my entry about Jack in *Roads to War*. I think you will love the humanity in this tale.

Petty Officer Donald John (Jack) Ross, W/1231

Jack was born in Ararat in 1920. He left home when he was 16 to commence an apprenticeship as a *Car and Wagon Builder* with the Victorian Railways at their Newport workshops. In 1938 Jack joined the Royal Australian Naval Reserve (RANR) in Williamstown, signing up for a period of three years.

With the onset of war looming the RANR was mobilised and on August 31 1939, Jack aged just 19 years, was based at HMAS *Cerberus III*, the naval training establishment located in Port Melbourne (later recommissioned as HMAS *Lonsdale* in 1940). Originally listed as a 'Writer', with specialised training, this soon changed to 'Joiner'. His rating changed again, in June 1941, to a 'Joiner IV'.



LEST WE FORGET



Petty Officer Donald Ross – 1942



As vaccinations for typhoid were rolled out for the RANR poor Jack ended up being quite unwell. Fortunately for him another 'Writer', Harry Edward (Ted) Rolley, feeling sorry for his new mate from the bush, invited Jack to visit his family home in Williamstown. Jack was welcomed into this household and especially by Ted's sister Lesley. This house in Twyford St became a regular leave destination for Jack and over time a romance developed between the couple and by 1940 they were an item.

Training on the navy bases was intense and Jack moved between HMAS *Lonsdale* (Port Melbourne) and HMAS *Cerberus* (Flinders) before catching the train to Sydney – in November 1940 - from where he embarked for HMAS *Melville* (Darwin) aboard the SS *Zealandia*. This ship was later sunk in Darwin Harbour in February 1942 during the Japanese air attack.



SS *Zealandia* painted in wartime colours in her role as a troop carrier.

Aboard the SS *Zealandia*, (off the coast of Queensland) en route to Darwin, Jack wrote the following letter to his parents:

Dear Mum and Dad

If I am not a sailor now, I never will be. We have been out now about 2 days & I have been a bit dizzy & I have been off my tucker a bit but hope to pick up from now on. We have had a good trip but it is very crowded. Excuse the writing as the ship is rocking a fair bit but I just shifted my quarters up to the smoking room. There are about 20 Navy and 100s of AIF & RAAF all going to the same place.

I had a good time in Sydney. I went over the bridge & to the pictures etc. But I only had one night there as we sailed the next day.

It's not a bad ship but it is too crowded as you can expect on a troop ship. I sleep on a hammock right aft just under the gun platform. It's not a bad place but we get a bit of spray now & again. I am in a white shirt & khaki shorts & as you can guess around Brisbane is pretty hot & we are all sunburnt.

We will be in Brisbane in about 2 hours, but I don't think we will be able to get ashore except perhaps to get some fruit. I think this is all the news except Mum Les & I have decided that I give her a box on her 21st birthday 9th April so don't forget her birthday so I will close now with lots of love.

*Your loving son,
Jack xxx*

Back in Melbourne from Darwin, for a period of training at HMAS *Cerberus*, provided the perfect opportunity for Jack and Les to set a date. They were married on 25 April 1942, at the Electra Street, Methodist Church, Williamstown surrounded by family and friends.



The Wedding Party, 25 April 1942: Warrant Officer Edric (Ted) Howlett, Miss Linda Harsley, Jack, Lesley, Mrs Nada Gray, Leading Aircraftsman Ken Rowlands (Jack's cousin).

Jack's connection with his groomsman, Ted Howlett, had its origins in Ararat. The Ross and Howlett families were next door neighbours and the boys had grown up together. Their close friendship lasted for their lifetimes. In the 1960s both built new homes in Box Hill North, just a few blocks apart, both worked at the CRB, and they spent many family holidays together.

It wasn't long before Jack was posted again, this time to HMAS *Assault* (Port Stephens) in August 1942. HMAS *Assault* was a newly established training centre, the Joint Overseas Operational Training School for Australian and American (Navy and Army) under control of the Americans. Jack was amongst the first RANR to arrive here for training. Whilst the base was being constructed the armed cruiser HMAS *Westralia* was used as temporary accommodation for the trainees.

Instruction and training began immediately: for landing craft crews, beach parties (naval commandos) and combined signals teams. Training at *Assault* was intense, covering all aspects of landing operations on hostile shores. Jack, as a trainee, also experienced sea service onboard the HMAS *Westralia* during this time and, upon graduation, he was posted to the newly converted Infantry Landing Ship, HMAS *Manoora* in January 1943. Approval for Jack's transferral to the rating of 'A/Shipwright IV' occurred in April 1944, onboard HMAS *Manoora*.

During the years 1944 and 1945, crews spent months at sea with little respite or leave. At times mail was delayed which dampened spirits as the men longed to hear from loved ones so far away. Supplies were often stretched to the limit and fresh water was rationed. Despite this, the captain always reported that the men were well and praised their endurance. This sentiment was probably true, but a little glimpse of Jack's thoughts, and likely mirrored by many others, is found in another of his letters to his parents written April 1944:

PO D J Ross
Mess 19
HMAS *Manoora*

Dear Mum & Dad

...I hope this rotten war will finish soon. It is nearly five years soon & believe me I am pretty sick of the whole business after this long. It is certainly a waste of the best years of your life. Just think in a few days it will be two years since I was married. I have no regrets. Les is tops & Graeme is lovely although I don't see much of him. Well I guess this is all the news but it's just a note to let you know I am still hanging together.

Cheerio & lots of love

Your loving son

Jack
Kisses

As Jack composed this letter, he had little concept of what lay ahead.



1945: The Landing Ship Infantry HMAS *Manoora* (repainted in camouflage)

The *Manoora* originally operated as a cruise ship. She was requisitioned by the Royal Australian Navy in 1939, repainted a dark grey and outfitted as an Armed Merchant Cruiser. Her role was related to patrols, convoy and escort duties.

In 1943, HMAS *Manoora* underwent a full conversion to a Landing Ship Infantry (LSI). With a crew of 600, she was capable of carrying 1,250 troops and 25 landing craft vehicles. With her sister ships, HMAS *Kanimbla* and HMAS *Westralia*, the three operated most of the Australian amphibious operations in the South West Pacific. All were repainted in camouflage in 1945. HMAS *Manoora* became part of the American 7th Amphibious Task Force and took part in 8 D-day assault landings.

In its capacity as a troop carrier the HMAS *Manoora* was not designed for attack and didn't participate in bombardment but was still armed for defence. Attack and bombardment were carried out by the large supporting convoy, comprised of destroyers, frigates and cruisers. But that didn't mean that the crew could be complacent, they remained vigilant and on guard at all times. The convoy would always be on the lookout for enemy submarines and the larger vessels would go on the hunt. Mine sweepers and divers were on constant alert.

It was the signal 'stand by to repel enemy air attack' that sounded all action stations with every member on every ship alert and in position. As enemy aircraft were sighted all ships would open fire, including the LSI's. The skies would be lit up with intricate patterns of criss-crossing tracers in a frantic effort to shoot down the Kamikaze 'suicide' pilots before they could reach their chosen targets. HMAS *Manoora* contributed her first hostile shots in these desperate battles, and although there were a few close calls, she fortunately avoided being hit. The crew did, however, bear witness to some targets being hit and the destruction that was caused.



LEST WE FORGET



Jack would later make light of these events saying: *'I stood on the deck shaking my hammer as the planes flew low overhead, so close I could see the whites of the pilot's eyes'*. But the reality must have been so very different. Jack had actually trained and was qualified for 'Damage Control' onboard the ship, so his responsibilities were vital in maintaining the safety of all.

Assault landings were always intense operations. Cruisers, destroyers and rocket ships began a shattering bombardment of the land, clearing the way for the landing barges and the troops. At Balikpapan the *Manoora* lay close by one of the cruisers and she was continually shaken by the detonation of the powerful 6-inch guns.

The Battle of Balikpapan in Borneo, the campaign to liberate Japanese-held British and Dutch Borneo took place on 1 July 1945. The Allied invasion fleet consisted of around 100 ships. The landing had been preceded by heavy bombing and shelling by Australian and US air and naval forces.

Each landing barge carried 20 to 30 heavily armed troops. When it reached the beach the ramp was dropped and the



American manned amphibious vehicles during the landing of Australian troops at Balikpapan, Borneo.



Lowering a landing barge from *HMAS Manoora*

troops rapidly exited. This procedure was repeated over many hours until all the troops were ashore.

Each of the LSI's had a beach party as part of its component, which included: a boat repair and recovery section under a boatswain: two Petty Officers and 14 seamen as boat crews, two artisan mates, two torpedomen, a sailmaker's mate, four shipwrights and joiners, four motor mechanics and two stokers in the repair section.

Following the landings, injured soldiers were brought back to the ship for medical attention and transport to hospital. In 1945 three of these men died of their wounds and were buried at sea with full naval honours. At each burial, the crew of *HMAS Manoora* stood to attention, paying respect to their fallen comrades.

Balikpapan was the final assault landing for *HMAS Manoora* and after completion, she headed back to Morotai to load up with supplies, the remainder of the 7th AIF division, ambulance and medical units, RAAF men and a company of Army Engineers. Unloading these, she then took onboard injured AIF soldiers and once more turned and sailed back to Morotai. Waiting there in anchorage, rumours began to circulate that the ship was at last to go home.

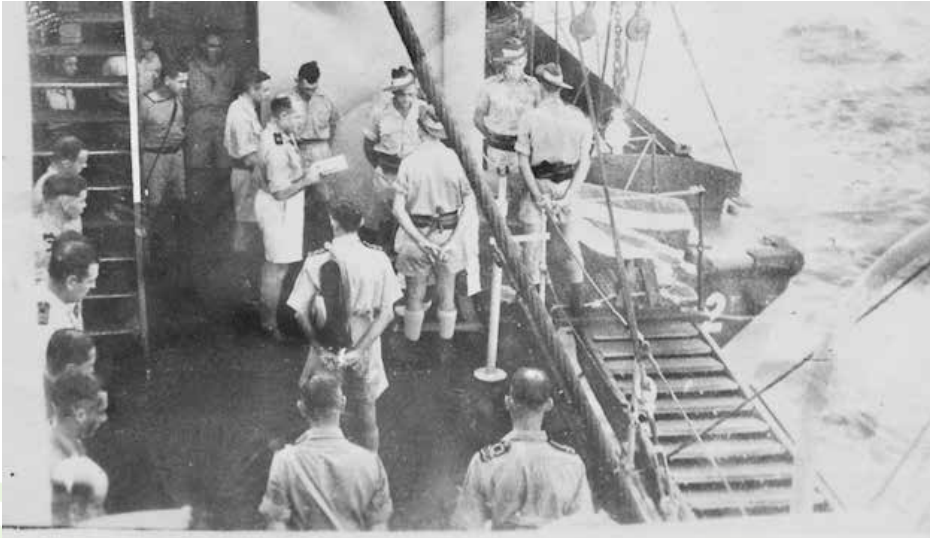
'A wave of wild, almost hysterical cheering thundered throughout the length and breadth of *Manoora* following the long-awaited announcement over the ship's speakers.

"It is expected that Manoora will be in Sydney before the end of July."

Source: Taken by Storm, p. 230



Troops climbing down the nets on *HMAS Manoora* (Private collection)



Burials at sea aboard HMAS Manoora.(Family collection)

It had been twelve months since the ship had last been in Sydney and almost eighteen months since the crew had enjoyed a decent period of leave. Jack was enjoying his leave when hostilities ceased. In August 1945 he was transferred to HMAS *Penguin* (Sydney) but he was quickly transferred to HMAS *Lonsdale* (Port Melbourne). He received his final discharge in October 1945 and was at last free to join his family after six long years of war. His service aboard HMAS *Manoora*, from its conversion to an

LSI in 1943 to the end of the assault operations in 1945, was certainly a record to be proud of. Jack had started the war as a young 19 year old and was now a man of 25 years with a wife and small child. This was a brand new world and it would certainly take some time to adjust.

I am indebted to Janet Macloy, Jack's daughter, for this thorough summary of Jack's service. She has done Jack proud.

Below is an extract from Buzz Review, the ship's newsletter, 'A Chaplain's Chatterings' by Chaplain N R Symes RAN, HMAS Manoora, July 1945. It records HMAS Manoora's log as a troop carrier.

It can be asked reasonably, breathes there a man in this ship's company with soul so dead that he does not feel proud of this record :-

OPERATION	PLACE	DATE
Assault Landing with U.S. troops at	TANAHMERAH BAY, N.G.	22. 4.44.
Reinforcement trip for U.S. Army to	Humboldt Bay, N.G.	7. 5.44.
Assault Landing with U.S. troops at	TOEM, opp. WAKDE ISLAND	17. 5.44.
Reinforcement trip for U.S. Army to	Toem	5. 6.44.
Assault Landing with U.S. troops at	MOROTAI ISLAND	15. 9.44.
Assault Landing with U.S. troops at	LEYTE GULF (PHILIPPINES)	20.10.44.
Reinforcement trip for U.S. Army to	Leyte Gulf	14.11.44.
Assault Landing with U.S. troops at	LINGAYEN GULF	9. 1.45.
Reinforcement trip for U.S. Army to	Lingayen Gulf.	10. 2.45.
Reinforcement trip for U.S. Army to	Manila	25. 3.45.
Reinforcement trip for U.S. Army to	Manila	9. 4.45.
Assault Landing with A.I.F. troops	TARAKAN Is. (BORNEO)	1. 5.45.
Reinforcement trip for A.I.F. to	Tarakan Is.	7. 5.45.
Assault Landing with A.I.F. troops	LABUAN Is. (Straits Set.)	10. 6.45.
Assault Landing with A.I.F. troops	BALIKPAPAN (BORNEO)	1. 7.45.
Reinforcement trip for A.I.F. to	Balikpapan	7. 7.45.
8 Initial Assault Operations		
8 Reinforcement trips.		



And now for something beautiful

I am a little short of space in this newsletter so I thought I would show you a few pieces of sculpture – by the masters – Michelangelo and Rodin.

The Pieta (in English 'The Pity') is in St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican City. It is one of a number of works on the same theme by the artist. It is carved in Carrara marble and it is the only piece that Michelangelo ever signed. This famous work of art depicts the body of Jesus on the lap of his mother Mary after the crucifixion. Michelangelo's interpretation of the Pieta was unprecedented in Italian sculpture at that time balancing the Renaissance ideals of classical beauty with naturalism. Michelangelo was only 24 when he created it.

Michelangelo had a habit of shouting at his sculptures and even occasionally lashing out at them with his tools. But it was an unemployed geologist from Hungary (with Australian citizenship) who won infamy in 1972 by leaping over the railings at St. Peter's Basilica to attack the Pieta with a hammer. With 12 blows, Laszlo Toth knocked off Mary's left arm, snapped off the tip of her nose, and damaged her cheek and left eye. It has been immaculately repaired – no pun intended. Toth was not prosecuted as he was deemed to be insane at the time.

The other sculptures I want to show you were never completed. They are called the Slaves or Prisoners and they are housed in the Academia Gallery in Florence. There are four sculptures and I think they are the more powerful as their emergence from the rock is akin to birth. But the twisted shapes of the bodies depict anguish.

The fame of these four powerful statues – named by scholars as The Awakening Slave, The Young Slave,



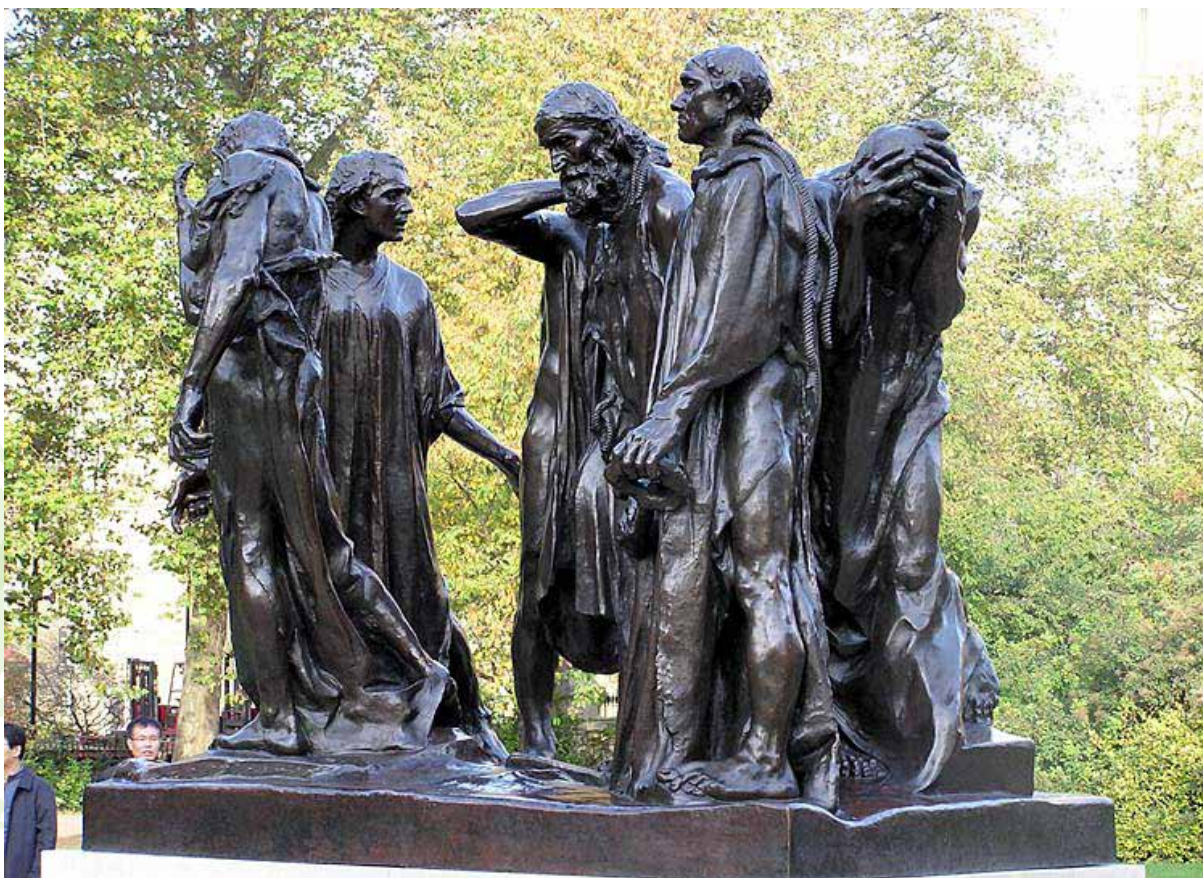
The Bearded Slave and The Atlas (or Bound) – is due above all to their unfinished state. These sculptures have been interpreted in many ways. As we see them, in various stages of completion, they evoke enormous strength as they try to free themselves from the bonds and physical weight of the marble. It is now claimed that the artist deliberately left them incomplete to represent this – to symbolically free themselves from their material trappings.



The Bearded Slave and the Atlas



The Awakening Slave and the Young Slave.



Now move about 450 years later to the work of the French sculptor, Augustus Rodin, generally thought to be the founder of modern sculpture.

Many of Rodin's most notable sculptures were criticized as they clashed with figurative sculpture traditions in which works were decorative, formulaic, or highly thematic. Rodin's most original work departed from traditional themes of mythology and allegory. He modelled the human body with naturalism, and his sculptures celebrate individual character and physicality. Although Rodin was sensitive to the controversy surrounding his work, he refused to change his style, and his continued output brought increasing favour from the artistic community.

One of his most famous works is the Burghers of Calais which is in the Victoria Tower Gardens in London. Under French law no more than twelve casts of this piece were permitted after Rodin's death. The London casting, purchased by the British Government in 1911, is one of those. Rodin often duplicated parts of his statues. For example two of the heads on this grouping are identical and a third only slightly altered.

The story of the burghers goes back to the Hundred Years War between England and France. In 1346, after a England's victory in the Battle of Crec, they laid siege to the city of Calais, while the French King, Phillip VI ordered the city to hold out at all costs. Philip failed to lift the siege, and starvation eventually forced the city to negotiate a surrender.

King Edward III offered to spare the people of the city if six of its leaders would surrender themselves to him, presumably to be executed. Edward demanded that they walk out wearing nooses around their necks, and carrying the keys to the city and castle. One of the wealthiest of the town leaders, Eustache de Saint Pierre, volunteered first, and five other burghers joined with him. Saint Pierre led this envoy of volunteers to the city gates. It was at this moment, a poignant mix of defeat, heroic self-sacrifice, and willingness to face imminent death, that Rodin captured in his sculpture, scaled somewhat larger than life. The burghers expected to be executed, but their lives were spared by the intervention of England's queen who persuaded her husband to exercise mercy by claiming that their deaths would be a bad omen for her unborn child.

Appeal for photographs

I know this is a bit of a long shot but you never know. I would like to obtain as many photographs as I can of the people I am writing about in Roads to War. These could include photos taken in their service uniforms, photos at work in the CRB/RCA/RTA/VicRoads or photos taken at any other times. The people I am looking for are listed below. I realize that those in the First World War are probably long lost but you might see a familiar name that rings a bell or know of a distant relative who might have something.

I don't want photocopies. If you could arrange to have a photograph of a photograph taken on an iPhone you can email or text it to me. Alternatively, you can post originals to me at 194B Riversdale Road, Hawthorn, 3122 and I can photograph them and send the originals back to you.

I don't care how small they are or their condition. I might be able to make something of them. The people I need are listed below.

First World War

Edward Erskine Dilworth, J.H.Travers, William Bartlett, Charles Quail, Matthew Robert Allison, Rolf Frederick Jansen, Simon King, George James Cooper, Harold Dunstan Page, Robert Hazel Smith, Alfred Reginald Linford, William Lee Murrell, Thomas Frederick John Kneale, Lee Montrose Graham, Leslie Wilkens White, Leonard James Herd, Fred Goran Payne, Wesley Talbot Williams, and Arthur Stuart Ponting.

Second World War

Alexander Peter Romilly Bruford, Donald Charles Green, Frederick Hunter, Bernard George Hutchins, William Albert Jones, Roy Leslie Rough, Robert Neil Tucker, Mervyn Ernest Bailey, Jeffrey William Barton, Leslie Frank Beecher, Bill Brake, Bill Carpenter, Bob Eastick, Harold Eicke, Bruce Genat, Bill Gill, Howard Stowe Goudie, Frank Hosking, Len Iazard, Ray Jardine, Ted Howlett, Noel Keil, Frank Helsham, Ted King, Albert Kyle, Harold Masters, Eric Moncrieff, William Francis Neville, Andrew Noble, Clem Perrin, David Proudfoot, Charlie Robinson, Ron Simpson, Harold Stein, Bob Swift, Alan Thompson, John Turnbull, William (Hec) Waugh, Frank Watts, Gordon Wilson, Basil Abery, Owen John Bugg, Kevin Bush, Rick Clarke, Wally Dyall, David Hewson, John Pittard, Bill Lindstedt, Alan Muir, Gordon Rogers, Jack Ryan, Harold Gray, Bill Dolamore, Frank Jackson, Jack O'Keefe, Bill Miles, Keith Pullin, Frank Hopwood, Peter Koziell, Patricia Mary Marr, Erwin Matzner, Sid Mulford, Elemer Nyoeeger, Bill Porritt, Tom Scott, Jim Symonds, Gus Veismanis, and George Whyley.

Korean War

Mick Doyle.

Vietnam War

Peter Robinson, Michael Butler.

Trivia and didactic whimsies

I've been everywhere man

I have been in many places in my life but I've never been in Cahoots. Apparently, you can't go alone. You have to be in Cahoots with someone.

I've also never been in Cognito. I hear no one recognises you there.

I have, however, been in Sane. They don't have an airport; you have to be driven there. I have made several trips there, thanks to my friends and family. I live close so it's a short drive.

I would like to go to Conclusions, but you have to jump, and I'm not too much on physical activity anymore.

I have also been in Doubt. That is a sad place to go and I try not to visit there too often.

I've been in Flexible, but only when it was very important to stand firm.

Sometimes I'm in Capable, and I go there more often as I'm getting older.

One of my favourite places to be is in Suspense! It really gets the adrenalin flowing and pumps up the old heart! At my age I need all the stimuli I can get!

And, sometimes I think I am in Vincible but life shows me I am not.

People keep telling me I'm in Denial but I'm positive I've never been there before!

So far, I haven't been in Continent, but my travel agent says it is on the list.

Don't Judge a book by its cover

A teenager brought her new boyfriend home to meet her parents. They were appalled by his haircut, his tattoos, and his piercings.

Later, the girl's mother said, "Dear, he doesn't seem to be a very nice boy."

"Oh, please, Mum!" said the daughter. "If he wasn't nice, would he be doing 500 hours of community service?"