

VicRoads Association

Newsletter No. 229



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Dear Members,

I'm feeling a bit philosophical today.

It all came about because I received a phone call last night from David Miles. He wanted to give me some news (about which you will read later on) but we chatted about other things and David mentioned the CRB Car Club. He talked with great enthusiasm about some of the events and the people involved. I think he was a bit taken aback because I knew so little about this but I could tell it was a passion for him.

And then I remembered the last time I saw Peter Lowe. He loves birds as do many other VicRoads people I recall. He gave me a back copy of Australian Birdlife which featured an article about David Hollands who was our family GP when we lived down at Orbost in the early 1970s. David is an authority on Australian birds of prey. Paul Tucker is another CRB 'birdo'. Peter Balfe is another and the late Ivor Preston was another.

Jeff Briggs loved wine and could talk about it for hours but he was a collector too – of stamps, post-cards and vinyl records. Sandor Mokos lights up talking about music – a passion that many of us share. Sport is another interest that many of us share – although there can be distinctions. Jim Webber loves Hawthorn Football Club but Kay goes for St Kilda. I bet there are many Melbourne fans among us whose passions have overflowed recently. I am still hoping the Bombers can win another flag before I fall off the perch, but there are others who couldn't care less which team wins.

Of course there are many interests we all share in common and these bind us (and society) together. Our legal system is built on common interests held within the community to enable us to function properly as a society. Imagine what it would be like if we didn't have road rules. I have been to some countries where these common interests are immature and as a result there is mayhem on the roads. We shouldn't take anything for granted. It is possible too, to have common interests but not common attitudes. The most obvious example of this is politics. I vote one way but I have friends

who vote the other way, and I often wonder why. But we do have a common interest in wanting to see our country governed to standards we broadly share.

There are also exclusive interests which may divide us into groups. These separate us and tend to be prejudicial. They can develop into 'we' and 'they'. They may develop into opposition or even hostility and contemporary examples of these may be the anti-vaxxers or the conspiracy theorists who are being influenced by manipulation through the social media. Voting preferences can also be exclusive. Some people become so entrenched they resent people who vote differently. This also manifests itself in racial and religious prejudice.

But, on the other hand, there are interests that can be inclusive which draw people together and encourage collaboration. These interests are the ones I mentioned at the beginning – interests such as music, art, sport, cars, religion, poetry, literature, films, theatre and the like. We are all self-centred and we seek our private interests doing things that give us pleasure, but it is possible to live for yourself while living for others too. We all do it and we should celebrate our different interests as well as the common ones.

This is a segue into my passion which is art – especially the art of Vincent van Gogh. I love this man and his art. I have written about him later in the newsletter. I always like to have a photograph on the front page of the newsletter and I can't think of anything better than Vincent.

I hope you enjoy my tribute to him in 'And Now for Something Beautiful'.

David Jellie,
Chairman and Editor



Self portrait of Vincent van Gogh
– painted in Arles in 1889.

What's coming up

Christmas lunch at Waverley RSL at 12 noon on Monday 13 December

We are planning for the lunch assuming that it will not be affected by COVID 19 restrictions. If you wish to attend please contact Jim Webber by SMS or phone at 0412064527 or email jimwebber@optusnet.com.au

We will advise all those who contact Jim plus all those on our email address list as soon as we can confirm the final arrangements.

Occasional Lunches at Shoppingtown Hotel, 12 noon

Our next lunch will be held on Monday 7 February 2022. The 8 November 2021 lunch has been cancelled.

There is no longer a requirement to contact Kelvin York – just turn up.

Dinner at Glen Waverley RSL

Our next dinner will be held on Thursday 17 March 2022. We will provide details later.

Annual Golf Day

We plan to have our annual Golf Day at Green Acres Golf Club in Kew on Friday 1 April 2022. More details will be provided next year.

Warrnambool Trip

We had to cancel this trip in 2021 because of COVID. We are now proposing that we will go on the 10, 11 and 12 May 2022 i.e. two nights of accommodation. Details will be provided early next year.

Vale

Francis Kwong

Francis (Frank to all his work colleagues) died recently following illness over the previous two years.

Frank was born in Hong Kong in 1939 and was educated there at King's College before coming to Australia to study Mining Engineering at the Ballarat School of Mines. He then completed a Civil Engineering degree at the University of Melbourne.

Frank joined the CRB in 1964 where he worked for 55 years always with enthusiasm for the tasks given to him. A major project upon which Frank worked was Section A of the Mulgrave Freeway - now called the Monash Freeway between Warragul Road and Huntingdale Road.

After he retired from VicRoads he joined Casey Shire for 10 years completing his working life at the age of 70 years.

Frank is survived by his wife Dzintra, eldest son Mark and youngest son Stephen. He was the proud grandfather of Rachel, Luke and Ben. I extend our sincerest sympathies to all of them.

Frank was a loyal member of the VicRoads Association and was a regular attendee at all our functions. Dzintra has indicated that she would like to continue receiving our newsletters.

Alan Hamley

David Miles rang me to say that Alan had died recently (2 September 2021). Alan was not a member of our Association. David was alerted to his death through the Scotch College magazine.

Alan attended Scotch from 1953 to 1957 where he was a House Captain of music and participated in rowing. He graduated as an engineer from Monash University in 1965 and became a senior construction engineer in Dandenong Division. He met his wife, Anita, at the CRB – where she was a librarian.

Alan was a car enthusiast and was a member of the CRB Car Club. He had a close friendship with Peter Brock and he drove competitively on the motor racing circuit. It is a little known fact but Peter Brock actually became a member of the CRB Car Club. Alan was also a member of the Wine Club and his other interests included music, the stock market and golf. Alan died just shy of his 82nd birthday.

Bruce Arnott

David also informed me of the death of Bruce Arnott in August. Bruce was 74. Bruce was not a member of the Association.

Bruce worked in Plans and Surveys in Kew and later shifted to Dandenong Division in Nunawading. He was a close colleague of David, Norm Bettess and Dennis Maxwell. His brother, Ron, also worked at VicRoads.

News from members

Nick Szwed

Nick wrote to Gerry Turner about his story published in Newsletter 227. This is what he wrote:

'Hi Gerry, I just finished reading your story of your Vietnam war experience. I want to thank you for writing it.

I know and have known a few war veterans in the past but they have not wanted to say much about their experience, particularly not about their bad experiences. A couple of guys I know are still struggling but are unable to talk about it. You give a few insights to the toll that war has on human survivors and how that comes about. The more we can understand these things as a community, the better off will the veterans and we, be.

I wish there could be more discussion about this issue i.e. the effect of war on people, at occasions like ANZAC Day, so that we may try harder to avoid war.

Regards, Nick.'

Jim Webber

Jim also wrote to Gerry as follows:

'Hi Gerry, Before the Association Newsletters are sent to be formatted and printed, David sends them to me for proof-reading. The latest Newsletter has your story about your service in Vietnam. I found it to be extremely interesting and moving for several reasons.

We lived opposite a Vietnam Vet (a motor mechanic) in East Doncaster for probably 30 years. We got on very well, but he never wanted to talk about the War. My younger brother, my only sibling, was in the ballot. He and his mates were strongly opposed to the War, so he was very pleased to avoid being conscripted. It was also a great relief in our household. My mother's brother, her only sibling, was killed on the first day the Australians went in battle in WW2, in Libya in January 1941 when I was 5 months old. As you'd expect, this greatly affected my Mum, and the possibility of my brother being conscripted would have been devastating for her.

Regards, Jim.'

Ted Barton

Ted wrote as follows:

'David, Your stories in the recent Newsletter about WW2 reminded me of my early years growing up on the farm at Gundowring in the 1940s.

Like many families at that time even in such small rural places, while the war was far away, we were reminded

of it almost daily either in broadcasts on the old battery powered radio or in the newspapers (that only came once or twice a week). With the large training and staging military camps at Bandiana and Bonegilla about 40 miles away we saw military activity quite often and as kids we loved seeing the strange vehicles on the road and they often stopped for lunch breaks in the shade of a large pine tree at the school. Anyway attached hereto is the file for a story I have written about my experiences of that time.

Regards, Ted.'

I have a great respect for Ted's engineering knowledge and skills – especially in traffic engineering – and I have often marvelled how this expertise was spawned in the high country of Victoria up in the Kiewa Valley. He was apologetic about the quality of the photographs he included (and I have to agree with him – they are not too flash) but I could not leave them out because he talks of the landscape of his home with such great affection.

He called his story How Green is My Valley and here it is.

How Green is my Valley

This picture was taken from just near the 'tree line' of the main spur (ridge) running from the foothills of Mt Bogong northwards along the east side of



the Kiewa River valley. The straight road running across the middle foreground is the Gundowring Main Road at Gundowring. The Kiewa River can be just seen running across the middle of the picture, with the line of willow trees along it.

The low, lightly treed, spur on the far side of the river comes off Mt Big Ben and separates the districts of Gundowring from Dederang (hidden behind the spur). Part of the Kiewa Valley Highway can be just seen above the spur where it meets the Yackandandah – Dederang Road running back along the small valley in the background (top left). The Kiewa Valley Highway comes through Dederang and up over the spur at what is known as the Dederang Gap (just hidden) but located near where the ridge joins the 'tree line' of the Mt Big Ben range in the background and continues (hidden in this view) to where it comes close beside the Kiewa River then northwards (out of the picture to the right) to Wodonga. In the other direction the Kiewa Valley

Highway continues (hidden) out of the picture on the left side towards Tawonga and Mt Beauty.

Almost in the centre of this picture is our family home, and the driveway to the Gundowring Road can be seen lined with some low trees. This was "Kent Meadows", one of the several properties selected by my grandfather in the 1870s, and named after his birth place in Kent, England. The property extends from the Gundowring Road to the River and from a point about two hundred metres north of the house, southwards for about a kilometre (hidden and out of the left side of this picture). The property also included a separate large paddock up on the hillside on the East side of the valley part of which is seen here amongst the gum trees in the immediate foreground.

In my 'young' days, with my brothers and (sometimes sisters as well), we roamed about through these hills both sides of the river chasing rabbits, looking for Kangaroos and other wildlife and we occasionally climbed to the top of the main ridge on the east side of the valley to look down into the Valley of the Mitta Mitta River in the vicinity of Eskdale.



This picture is the view looking South from near the home (in the centre of the previous picture). It shows the Kiewa valley with the western edge of Mt Bogong (snow-capped) just visible in the distant background. The southern boundary of the 'Kent Meadows' property is marked by the large white butted gum tree standing by itself in mid picture near the right hand side. The Kiewa River is hardly visible except for a line of green willow trees along it (just below the tree line of the western range). It is difficult to make out the Gundowring Road running diagonally across and near the farm houses in the centre of the picture.

The single room, one teacher, Upper Gundowring Primary School that I attended up to Grade 7 is marked by the group of large green trees (Scotch Pines) just to the right of centre, (below the tree line of the western range in the right background). The tip of a spur off the eastern range, visible on the left side of the picture, obscures a greater view of Mt Bogong. Most of those years I rode a horse to school as did

several of the other 20 to 25 children. The school had a small paddock for the horses to graze while we were in class.



The pictures, taken in 1986 during a reunion function marking the Centenary for Upper Gundowring, show what remains of the old school building. The top picture was taken from the 'horse paddock' looking past what remains of the pine plantation at the school. The original building included a fire place and chimney on the right-hand side. The fire place was positioned between the two large black-boards on that northern wall of the school. The opening (doorway) visible in the picture was actually a window and the entry doorway was in a small porch attached to the front (east) wall at the north side wall. The school was closed in the 1953 with the opening of a new Kiewa Valley Consolidated School on the Kiewa East Road at Tangambalanga to which the children from these remote districts were bussed. I finished my primary schooling here at the old school in 1948 and went on to the Technical School at Wangaratta.

It was up behind the spur on the eastern range (mentioned above) that an aeroplane crashed during WW2. At the school during the early 1940s when I attended with several of my siblings, it was the custom for children to report 'news items' in the first session of the school day. One of the children from a family farming in the foothills of the southern part of

Upper Gundowring reported seeing bright lights descending through the fog and mist of the night sky in the hills on the east side of the valley. This was 1941, or thereabouts, as the war was very much in the news each day, the teacher we had at the school thought it somewhat odd and immediately went to the nearby farm house (where he boarded) and reported it to the Police Station at Dederang.

It turned out that an RAAF plane had been reported missing on a flight from somewhere north in NSW (I think) bound for East Sale in South Gippsland. For the next several weeks after this report there were aircraft and military vehicles and search parties combing the hills and bush in the area where the lights had been seen but nothing was found. The mountainous topography and thick bush made it very difficult for the search parties and it was some years later, after the end of WW2, that a stockman, who grazed cattle on the range between the Kiewa River valley and the Mitta Mitta River valley to the East, came across the crash site by chance while rounding up his cattle. He was a well-known stockman and knew those hills better than anyone else so it was not surprising that he found the crash site. It was a Beaufort bomber on a training flight that simply got lost in bad weather. The story goes that during the war there was a military radio repeating station at the town of Eskdale on the upper Mitta Mitta River. The aircraft was to land at East Sale and the crew misheard the word Eskdale, hearing it as 'East Sale' and it descended in thick cloud and rain mist in preparation to land but was a long way off course and short of the East Sale aerodrome and thus crashed into the side of the mountain. There were no survivors.

In those early years during the war we often saw military vehicles (trucks and tracked Bren gun carriers, jeeps) from the large training and staging base at Bandiana and Bonegilla (near Wodonga) doing training exercises on the Gundowring Road. My father had enlisted in the army and was 'stationed' (training) at Bandiana. He was able to come home on leave regularly and, as a qualified carpenter and builder (before he became a farmer), he made wooden replica 303 rifles for his three youngest sons (my next older and next younger brothers and myself) and trained us in the various drills they had to do in the army. We became quite good at it and through an uncle (also in the army training at Bandiana), it became known to the Drill Sergeant who arranged for us to go down to Bandiana and give a demonstration in front of the assembled troops. We went through all of the various 'drills': slope arms, present arms, order arms, etc. and at the end of it I remember the Sergeant saying to the assembled troops that if these bloody kids can do it properly why can't you?

My father completed his army training but was not assigned to a unit as he was within months of the upper age limit for the army and he already had eight children - so he was discharged. He was not very happy about that and as the RAAF had a higher age limit he immediately enrolled in the Airforce and served through to the end of the war.

However, to his great disappointment, he was not permitted to serve overseas because of his large family (at that stage there were nine children) which would have been a burden on the State if he did not return. He served as a Fitter and Rigger at several RAAF bases but mostly at Point Cook, Laverton and East Sale.

Stan Hodgson

I called to see Stan before the COVID lockdown and spent a very happy hour or too talking about his recollections of working at the CRB back in the days of the Old Tin Shed behind the Exhibition Building.

One thing I didn't know was that every staff member was issued with a freshly laundered hand towel each week. They were distributed by Harry Stein. I have written about Harry in Roads to War. He was a member of the 15th Australian Field Baking Platoon during the Second World War baking bread for the troops. Harry was an odd jobs man and one of his tasks was to deliver a fresh towel each week, to all members of staff, and to gather the old ones for laundering.

They weren't worth pinching as they had Country Roads Board emblazoned diagonally across the towel, but it didn't dissuade Stan - who is otherwise the most honest of men.

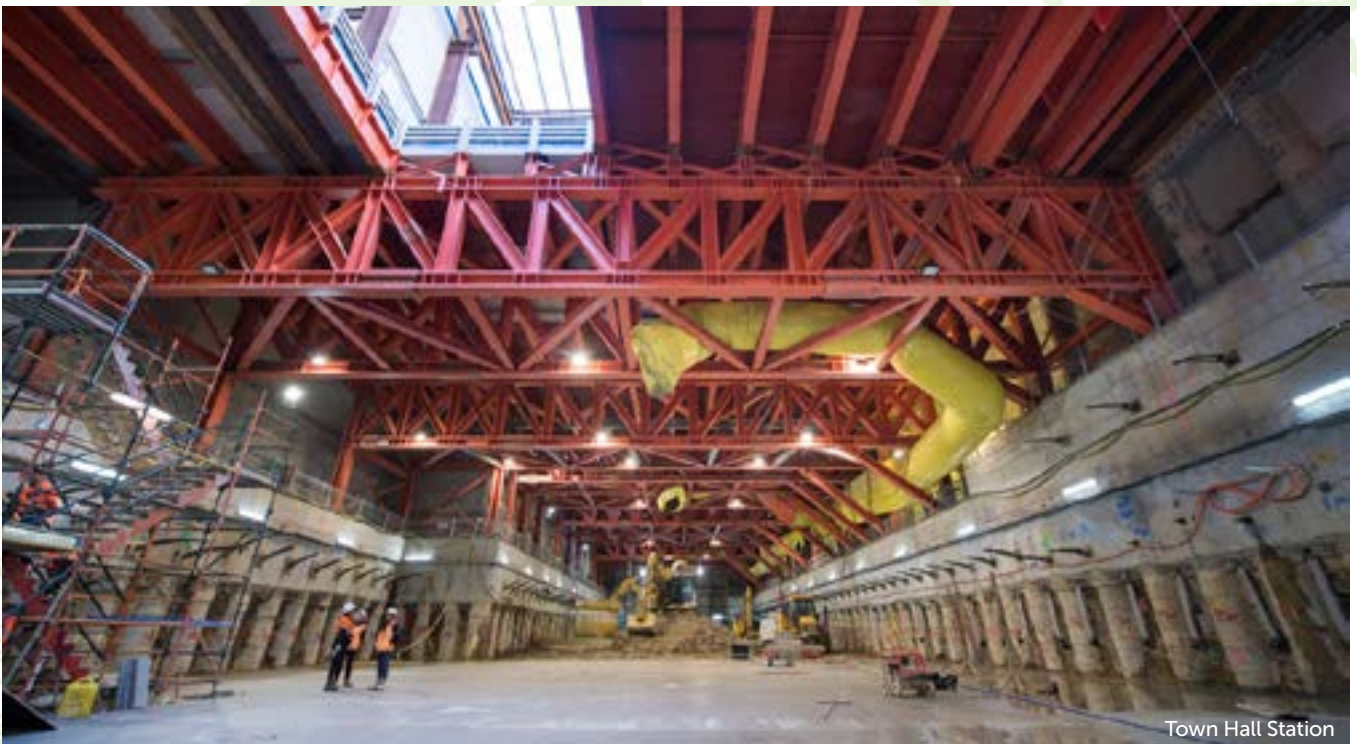
Stan also showed me something else he had saved from his student days at the Gordon Institute of Technology in Geelong. He was the recipient of the Princes Shield. The Princes Shield was first awarded in 1927. It was awarded annually to the outstanding student of the year based on criteria based on academic success, sporting ability and leadership qualities. Stan was awarded the shield in 1948.

Here is Stan with his stolen towels and his much deserved Princes Shield.



Progress on the Metropolitan Rail Project

We hope next year we might have an opportunity to visit this site, but in the meantime, here are a few recent photographs of progress on some of the stations.



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The stories of these men are new additions to the list of CRB men who served in the wars. Each of them has a remarkable story. I hope you enjoy them.

Private Robert (Bob) Griffith Humphreys 554

Bob's name should have been on the Roll of Honour because he first started work at the CRB in 1916 as a chainman for a survey party. He enlisted in January 1917 and was posted to the 1st Anzac Light Railways. He came from North Melbourne and had just turned 20 years of age. His occupation was 'Fireman' - so perhaps he had left the CRB before joining up. He must have tried to enlist earlier but had been rejected because of *varicella* - more commonly known as chicken pox. But he was successful the second time around.

The 1st Light Railway Company was raised in Victoria, in December 1916. The unit embarked from Melbourne on the HMAT *Ballarat* in February 1917, so Bob had only just joined up before he was bound for France. The *Ballarat* was torpedoed by a submarine in the English Channel but everyone was recovered to Devonport (Plymouth) and no lives were lost.

The raising of this and other Light Railway units coincided with the implementation of a new battlefield strategy. The widespread use of battlefield rail transformed supply, movement of soldiers and casualty evacuation.

The Light Railway Companies were operated by the Engineers. The maintenance of roads had become problematic because of the lack of available manpower and the movement and storage of materials - such as rock - clogged up the supply routes.

The first light railway operated by the British was, in fact, a French one. It had a track gauge of 60 cm (two feet), and this was subsequently applied to all light railways constructed by the army. Prefabricated, lightweight tracks could be easily carried and laid quickly, with minimal preparation of the ground. Special units were formed for the construction, maintenance and operation of the new system.

Bob was hospitalised for 20 days on the ship and then three more times in England. He did not serve in France. He had been diagnosed with trachoma - an affliction that dogged him for the rest of his life.

Trachoma is an infectious disease caused by bacterium *Chlamydia trachomatis*. The infection causes a roughening of the inner surface of the eyelids. This roughening can lead to pain in the eyes, breakdown of the outer surface or cornea of the eyes, and eventual blindness. Untreated, repeated trachoma infections can result in a form of permanent blindness.

The bacteria that cause the disease can be spread by both direct and indirect contact with an affected person's eyes or nose. Indirect contact includes through clothing or flies that have come into contact with an affected person's eyes or nose. Children spread the disease more often than adults. Poor sanitation, crowded living conditions, and not enough clean water and toilets also increase the spread.

Bob returned to Australia on the H.T. *A24* embarking in late August 1917. He was discharged from the Army in May 1918.

After his discharge, he worked with a number of building contractors and he met a young CRB engineer who was so taken with Bob, he persuaded him to join the CRB. That young engineer was the venerable Paddy O'Donnell, later to become the Chairman of the Board. Notwithstanding that he was half blind, Bob was a wizard at controlling large crews of men. He could walk on to a bridge site and pick up where the mistakes were. He was not allowed to drive but had a chauffeur to drive him around. Bob inspired loyalty in all those who worked for him.

From 1933 to the Second World War, Bob supervised the construction of the major bridges in the State. These included the Hoddle Street Bridge over the Yarra River and the Latrobe River Bridge at Rosedale. During the Second World War he worked for the Allied Works Council building the runways, roads and buildings at Essendon Airport. After the war he built the Swan Street Bridge, Johnston Street Bridge over the Yarra, Bell Street Bridge over Merri Creek, Brunswick Road Bridge over Moonee Ponds Creek, Banksia Street Bridge, Albion Rail Overpass, Reynard Street Bridge, Pascoe Vale Road Bridge and the Lancefield Road Interchange Bridge on the Calder Freeway. It is fair to say that no-one has had a greater influence on bridge construction in Victoria. Not bad for a fellow with dodgy eyesight.

Bob served the CRB for 32 years.



Chief Bridge Engineer, Basil Abery, farewelling Bob Humphreys on a stellar career. February 1965.

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Bob Humphreys supervised the construction of the major bridges in the State including Hoddle Street Bridge and Johnston Street Bridge.

Lance Corporal Aubrey Duncan Mackenzie 3157

Aubrey Mackenzie was born in on 1895 at North Carlton and was educated at Melbourne Continuation (High) School. He joined the Victorian Public Works Department as a pupil-architect in 1912, changing in the following year to pupil-engineer. He enlisted in the AIF in April 1915 and landed in Gallipoli in August. He was hospitalised on three occasions with dysentery, diarrhoea and colitis and he also suffered shell shock.

Aubrey served in the 6th Field Ambulance as a private. After the withdrawal from Gallipoli he was again hospitalised in Egypt and in June 1916 he arrived with the British Expeditionary Force at Marseilles. He joined the 8th Field Ambulance as a Lance Corporal. The unit's first major battle came during the disastrous Battle of Fromelles in July 1916, after which it served throughout the remainder of the war supporting the 8th Brigade's operations in France and Belgium.

He later joined K Supply Column in France and had another spell in hospital. While still in France in January 1919 Aubrey went absent without leave for 10 days for which he received a punishment of 14 days confined to barracks with forfeiture of 20 day's pay. He arrived back in Australia in March 1919 and was discharged in Melbourne in July 1919.

He re-joined the Public Works Department and married in 1924. In 1934 Mackenzie was promoted to Chief Engineer of the department in charge of ports and harbours. He had previously acquired experience in road engineering having been responsible for construction of the Yarra Boulevard and the Mount Donna Buang, Acheron Way and Ben Cairn roads. He also managed the construction of the

surroundings of the Shrine of Remembrance. Aubrey was at various times Chairman of the State Tourist Committee, the Motor-Omnibus Advisory Board and the Foreshore Erosion Board, and was Vice-President of the Marine Board, and a member of the committees for Rivers and Streams and Mount Buffalo National Park.

From 1938 to 1940 he became a full-time member of the Country Roads Board. This was a unique appointment because he was appointed from outside the Board.



Aubrey Mackenzie – Member of the CRB from 1938 to 1940

fitting-out berths, mobile cranes and workshops were developed. In 1942, Melbourne was the chief American supply port in Australia – traffic that year broke all records.

Under Mackenzie's administration, Melbourne remained the best mechanized Australian port, especially for bulk-loading. Construction of the Appleton Dock (opened in 1956) was a highlight, and the Tasmanian car-ferry was a notable achievement. A dredge was named after him.

He died in March 1962, aged 67.

Leading Aircraftman Kevin Walsh AO 147935

The 1952 CRB listing of staff who enlisted in the Second World War included a 'K. Walsh'. At first I had a bit of difficulty locating Kevin's details, but with the assistance of his colleagues, friends and family, I have been able to discover his story – and what a story it is!



Kevin Walsh at enlistment – 1944.

Kevin was born in St Kilda East in July 1925. He went to work at the CRB when he left school in 1942. He worked in an engineering office – drawing road signs – while at night he studied engineering at the Working Men's College (now RMIT).

He enlisted in the RAAF in March 1944 – at the age of 19. His file in the Australian Archives has not been digitized so that I have been unable to see details about his service. His

daughter, Bernadette, said that her father didn't refer to his wartime service often, except to say that he had a job decoding signals, and problem solving. He said that they were all packed up ready to go overseas, and were on the docks to be loaded into a troop ship in Brisbane (or maybe Townsville) when they received the message that the war was over and they were not being deployed.

He was discharged in October 1945 from RAAF COMM. I presume this is an acronym for RAAF Command. RAAF Command was the main operational arm of the RAAF during World War II.

Kevin was the grandfather of clinical neuropsychology in Australia and was the founder of the Australasian Society for the Study of Brain Impairment (ASSBI). After his discharge from the RAAF, he commenced medical studies in 1946 under the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Training Scheme which paid for all his university fees, books and a living allowance. This scheme enabled many working class men and women to gain a tertiary education.

In the first year of his medical training, he became interested in psychology and enrolled in the University of Melbourne's newly established Department of Psychology. He studied both medicine and psychology concurrently. After completing his medical studies, Kevin became interested in abnormal behaviour, and during his tenure as a Neuropsychiatric Medical Officer at the Mont Park Mental Hospital, he studied the complex behavioural alterations induced by prefrontal leucotomy, for which his degree of Master of Science was awarded in 1960. Working as a medical officer, he saw a clinical discipline that would unite psychological depth with neurology.

In 1961, Kevin joined the teaching staff of the University of Melbourne's Department of Psychology, initially in an honorary position. He taught his students to listen to and

observe the patient, talk to the family and to think logically, describing neuropsychology as 'a body-contact sport.' Kevin retired from teaching in 1991.

One of his most influential works was *Neuropsychology: A Clinical Approach*, first published in 1978, intended to be an introduction to the field. The book was published with David Darby in 1999, then published as *Walsh's Neuropsychology* in 2005, and was translated into a number of languages.

Australia is, as a consequence of Kevin's influence, a Mecca for neuropsychology training, having six doctoral and masters level training programmes. Kevin was the founding President of ASSBI in 1978, believing passionately in the need for multidisciplinary study of all forms of brain impairment in order to facilitate their understanding and optimal management.

In 1991, the year of his retirement, Kevin was awarded the honour of Officer of the Order of Australia. He continued to mentor students in the doctoral programme at Monash University over a number of years, providing gifts or prizes which were the fruit of his woodworking labours – his other passion. Kevin spent his retirement living in his family home in Ivanhoe, which he had shared with his late wife Pat, with whom he had six children and many grandchildren.



Dr Kevin Walsh AO – circa 2016.

Brian became an accountant after the war and died in 2020 aged 100.

Kevin died in 2017 aged 92.

All I can say is that Kevin was a huge loss to engineering!

Kevin's brother, Brian, served in the Australian Army. He enlisted on part time duty in the Citizen Military Forces in August 1940 and was called up for full time service in February 1943. He served in the No. 4 Australian Special Intelligence Personnel Section in New Guinea and the Philippines.

I wish to thank Professor Jennie Ponsford AO of Monash University and Kevin's daughter, Bernadette, for their assistance in discovering this remarkable man.

William (Bill) Egbert Golding

Bill's story is remarkable. He served in both World Wars – with the Welsh Artillery Regiment in the First World War and with an AIF Signals Corps in the Second World War.

You only have to do the maths to see that Bill was very young to serve in the First World War. He incorrectly stated his age and joined the Welsh Regiment at the tender age of 14. He actually



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celebrated his 15th birthday in the trenches in France. He must have been in the 2nd Battalion of the Welsh as he was part of the Battle of Mons and participated in the famous retreat in 1914. Despite being wounded by shrapnel in the face and legs, he served the remainder of the war in France and later, Palestine.

The youngest authenticated British soldier in World War I was twelve-year-old Sidney Lewis, who fought at the Battle of the Somme in 1916. Lewis' claim was not authenticated until 2013. In World War I, a large number of young boys joined up to serve as soldiers before they were eighteen which was the legal age to serve in the army. It was previously reported that the youngest British soldier was an unnamed boy, also twelve, sent home from France in 1917 with other underage boys from various regiments.

According to the BBC documentary *Teenage Tommies* (first broadcast in 2014), the British Army recruited 250,000 boys under eighteen during World War I. This included Horace Iles who was shamed into joining up after being handed a white feather by a woman at the age of fourteen. He died at the Battle of the Somme at the age of sixteen. Also signing up as a private at age fourteen was Reginald St John Battersby. He was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant at the insistence of his father and headmaster who thought that his rank was inappropriate for a middle class boy. Battersby was wounded by machine gun fire while leading his men over the top at the Somme. Three months later he lost a leg to shellfire.

Although the nominal roll states that Bill was born in London, he was actually born in Rise, Yorkshire – in January 1900. However he lived in Cardiff, Wales.

Bill arrived in Australia in December 1920 aboard a ship called "*Melta*". The passenger list also stated that his intended country of future residence was England so I don't think Bill was intending to settle down in Australia. His occupation was 'Telegraphist'. He came to here to work with the Marconi Company of England, and this period of employment provided the opportunity for him to visit Egypt, China, Japan and many other parts of the world.

In 1923, under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, he applied for the lease of a farm at Hattah in the Mallee region of Victoria. His application was successful and he was granted an allotment of 803 acres. His purpose was to become a wheat farmer. He had spent a bit of time doing some farming work and he had acquired assets worth £110 – comprising two horses (£30), cash (£10), Bank Account Mildura (£40), one gig (£25) and a harness (£5). He was just 23 and single.

However he forfeited the lease in 1934. I can only surmise that the friable nature of the soil, persistent droughts and the Great Depression all coincided to determine Bill's fate.

I am not sure of his next move but I suspect he went to Boundary Bend on the Murray River and did a bit of farming because it was from near here that he enlisted for the Second World War. He enlisted in the Australian Army at Nyah West in May 1941. His service number was V15321.

His file about his war service in the Australian Archives has not been digitized. However, in the Roadlines magazine of March 1965, it states that Bill was posted to the Singapore and Rabaul areas working on signal installations.

He enlisted in the 2nd AIF in May 1940 and was discharged in December 1942 from the 2nd Signals Training Battalion with the rank of Lance Sergeant. This means that he only served for about 18 months.

Bill joined the CRB in 1951 and became a Senior Bridge Overseer. He built many bridges around the State, including: Gooley's Bridge at Jamieson; Shamrock Bridge over the Campaspe River in Kyneton; Thom's Bridge over the Latrobe River; Djerrivarrah Creek Bridge on the Western Highway; Murray Road Bridge, Coburg and Gunn's Gully rail overpass at Moe.

He retired in 1964 and died in Mont Albert in 1976.

I wonder if any of you might have a photograph of Bill?

Private Ernest Lingenberg V128221

Ernest was born in Lismore in the Western District and enlisted at Cressy in July 1941. He was 31 years old when he enlisted. He stated in his papers that he was a labourer with the CRB.

His service file is heart-breakingly short – just one page. He was posted to the 39th Australian Infantry Battalion. It states that he landed at Port Moresby in New Guinea on 3 January 1942. The next entry is on 31 August 1942 – "*Died of wounds received in action.*" He was 32.

The last entry is "*Buried at Eora Creek Hospital*". This is somewhat misleading as there is no known grave for Ernest. Ernest is commemorated at the Bomana Cemetery on the outskirts of Port Moresby.

The archive does not reveal the real story of Ernest's sacrifice. The 39th Battalion was sent to New Guinea to defend the territory against a Japanese attack. Between July and August of that year the unit was heavily engaged in the defence of Port Moresby, fighting along the Kokoda Track. It was here that Ernest perished. The 39th fought several desperate actions against the Japanese as they attempted to hold out until further reinforcements could be brought up from Port Moresby. They were also later involved in the fighting around Buna – Gona. Such was their involvement in the battle that by the time they were withdrawn they could only muster 32 men and following its return to Australia, the unit was disbanded in early July 1943.



The Kokoda Memorial at Bomana consists of a rotunda of cylindrical pillars enclosing a circle of square pillars bearing on their inside bronze panels upon which the names of the dead are engraved.

In Carl Johnson's book about the Kokoda campaign, "Mud Over Blood Revisited", there is the following entry:

Ernest Lingenberg, 39Bn D Coy, Pte., V128221, DoW (Died of Wounds) Aged 32 probably on the Kokoda Track (no known grave) (possibly July-Sept). Foxhow Victoria Residence.

It is a shame that Ernest is not on the CRB Roll of Honour.



This photograph of Ernest is from Carl Johnson's "Mud Over Blood Revisited".

Erwin Josef Matzner-Levi



Erwin Matzner in 1978 – two years after his retirement.

Erwin was my first boss in Bridge Design Division. I was fortunate to know him. He was a very gentle and unassuming man, spoke nine languages fluently and was a talented cellist. The languages he spoke included the main Eastern European ones (including Russian) as well as French, Italian and English.

His death certificate described him as engineer and teacher and this is very apt – he taught me more about bridge design, as my first mentor, than anyone else. He was, in my view, an outstanding designer. He had textbooks in Serbian, Russian and German and, like many European engineers, often used graphical design methods.

Erwin was Jewish and he was always known at the CRB as Erwin Matzner. However I visited his grave in the Boroondarra Cemetery in Kew and saw that his name was in fact, Matzner-Levi. In a book written by J. Romano entitled Jews of Yugoslavia 1941-1945. Victims of genocide and participants in the national liberation war, Belgrade, 1980, the following entry – translated from Croatian to English – was included:

Matzner, Erwin¹; revolutionary (Rijeka²; January 15 1915 - ?). Son of Bruno and Irma b. Levi. He moved to Croatia in 1931 with his family from Andrychow, Poland, where his father worked as a clerk in the cement industry. After the establishment of the Independent State of Croatia, he was a technical student in Zagreb. He joined the partisans in 1943 as a fighter in the units of the 26th Dalmatian Division.

I am sure that this is Erwin. His birth date is exact and I know that he attended university in Zagreb, although he didn't mention his Polish heritage – he always claimed to be Croatian. And, of course, his mother's maiden name was Levi.

The 26th Dalmatian Division was a Yugoslav Partisan division formed in October 1943. The division mostly operated in Southern Dalmatia where it fought against parts of the 2nd Panzer Army, 118th Jäger Division, 7th SS Division, and 369th Infantry Division. Until the end of 1943, the 26th Division fought defensive operations in Makarska, on the Peljesac Peninsula and on Korcula Island against German forces advancing into Dalmatia after the capitulation of Italy. By 1944 only Vis Island remained unoccupied and the Division's main

1 His grave spells his name as Erwin – as I always knew it.

2 Rijeka is a Croatian port city on Kvarner Bay in the northern Adriatic Sea. It's known as the gateway to Croatia's islands.



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task was to prepare a defence for the anticipated German invasion – which was eventually cancelled. Vis was turned into large naval-air base for the Yugoslav Partisans and the Allies.

The 26th Dalmatian Division also carried out several seaborne landings on Dalmatian islands either alone or jointly with Allied British and American Commandos. In the final battles of the war, the division liberated Bihac, Gospic, Senj and Krk Islands and was also involved in battles near Klana and Ilirska Bistrica.

Erwin did not talk about his wartime experiences but he told me once that, when local engineers were captured by the German army, they were put to work by the Germans repairing bridges bombed by the Allied forces. To overcome sabotage, once a bridge was repaired, the Germans tied all the engineers and other workers to the bridge, and then they test loaded the bridge. If the bridge failed, everyone went down with it. My recollection was that this was Erwin's experience, but I don't trust my memory. I have contacted the Jewish Biographical Lexicon in Croatia to see if they might have some more information.

Erwin and his wife, Zlata Ana, and their infant daughter, Iris, arrived in Fremantle in May 1955 aboard the *Australia*.

Erwin retired in 1976 after 20 years of bridge design, to concentrate on his beloved cello.

He died on 4 June 1998. Since writing this memory, I have come to realize how much I loved and respected this man. I lost touch with him after he retired and that was my loss. I am ashamed that I neglected him but I take comfort in stopping at his grave – and remembering him – on my frequent walks through the Boroondara Cemetery. He was a remarkable person.

Lance Sergeant Charles (Charlie) Frederick Robinson VX26779



Charlie's enlistment photo.

Charlie was the Board's Title Survey Officer and later, the Assistant Principal Surveyor. He was born in Chiltern in Northern Victoria in July 1920. At the time of his enlistment in May 1940 (at Corowa) he described his occupation as 'Labourer'. His home address was in the small town of Wahgunyah.

Charlie was a member of the 2nd/24th Infantry Battalion. This was a Victorian Battalion which was raised in Wangaratta in July 1940. The 2nd/24th trained at Bonegilla before sailing for the Middle East in November 1940. Despite the successes of the British offensive early in 1941, the German Afrika Korps counter-attacked and the Allied Forces fell back to Tobruk. The 2nd/24th entered

Tobruk on 10 April and helped defend the "fortress" for the next eight months.

The battalion saw extensive service at Tobruk, manning the Red Line at a number of different locations and participating in the bitter fighting in the Salient. The Red Line was Tobruk's outer line of defence and consisted of a series of concrete pillboxes forming a semi-circle around the town. In October the majority of the Allied forces (the 9th Division), was evacuated by sea. The 2nd/24th was evacuated on the night of 20 October, sailing to Alexandria. The division was transferred to Palestine and Syria for rest and garrison duties.

By July 1942 German and Italian forces had reached El Alamein in Egypt, about seventy miles from Alexandria. The war in North Africa had become critical for the British Eighth Army. The 9th Division (of which the 2nd/24th was a part) consequently rushed from Syria to the Alamein area and held the northern sector for almost four months as the Eighth Army was reinforced for an offensive under new a commander.

Alamein was a great, although bloody, success for the Allies and by November, Axis forces were retreating. But the 9th Division was needed elsewhere and with the battle over it returned to Australia to face a new enemy - the Japanese. The 2nd/24th left Alamein during the first week of December and went to Gaza in Palestine. The battalion left its camp in Palestine in January 1943 for the Suez Canal and the return voyage to Australia. It reached Melbourne on 25 February.

Reorganised for jungle operations, in September 1943 the 2nd/24th participated in the division's amphibious landing at Red Beach, north-west of Lae. After fighting in the battles around Lae, Finschhafen, and Sattelberg, the battalion returned to Australia in March 1944.

After some leave, the 2nd/24th reformed in Queensland at Ravenshoe on the Atherton Tablelands, for what proved to be an extensive training period. Indeed the war was almost over before the battalion went into action again.

In April 1945 the 9th Division was transported to Morotai, which was being used as a staging in area in preparation for the amphibious landings on Borneo. After the massive pre-invasion air and naval bombardment, there was little opposition on the beaches. The 2nd/24th was ordered to push through and capture the airfield the next day. However, the Japanese stubbornly fought back and the airfield was not taken for some time. Tougher fighting was still to come.

The mountain ridges behind the town were the scene of difficult fighting. In the area of tangled hills and jungle-covered ridges, the Japanese used mines, booby traps, and suicide raids to delay the Australian advance. The 2nd/24th fought along Crazy Ridge. On 20 June it captured the

Australians' last main objective, Hill 90, after the hill had been hit by 21,000 artillery rounds and 600 mortar bombs.

Following the end of the war in August and Japan's surrender, the ranks of the 2nd/24th thinned, as men were discharged, transferred, or volunteered for the occupation force for Japan. Those who remained in the battalion returned to Australia in December 1945.

Charlie wrote to Melbourne Legacy in May 1970 seeking to join that organisation. Legacy wrote to the Army requesting a statement of his overseas service, and the Army responded as follows:

Amboina	13 December 1941	27 May 1942
Middle East	23 August 1942	25 February 1943
New Guinea	1 August 1943	16 September 1945
Borneo	8 April 1945	16 September 1945
Darwin	3 April 1941	12 December 1941

There are a few anomalies between this record and the history of the 2nd/24th Battalion given above but I think it can be explained as follows. All his records show him as a member of the 2nd/24th but he actually started in the 2nd/21st Battalion.

The 2nd/21st Battalion was raised in July 1940 at Trawool in central Victoria as part of the 23rd Brigade of the 8th Division. It was subsequently deployed to Ambon as part of Gull Force in December 1941 following the Japanese invasion of Malaya; however, with the defence of the island considered untenable due to the limited military resources available and overwhelming Japanese strength it was subsequently captured despite determined resistance, surrendering on 3 February 1942. Most members of the battalion became prisoners of war, and a large number died in captivity.

But Charlie survived to fight another day. I don't know how, but he was reported missing in April 1942 but in the following August it stated that he was not missing and that he had returned to Australia. Obviously there is another story here but we will never know. The Gull Force nominal roll states that Charlie escaped before capture. The original strength of Gull Force was 1,131 men. Only 52 escaped and Charlie was one of them. 779 men perished through military action, execution or died as prisoners. 300 survivors were repatriated to Australia after the war.

The ill-fated 2nd/21st Battalion all but disappeared in their first action of the war. Another CRB man, Donald Neave, was also in the 2nd/21st but he did not survive. He died as a prisoner of war of the Japanese. In the entry for him in Chapter 5 of *Roads to War*, I have written more extensively about the tragedy that befell Gull Force. It is a stain on Australia's military history.

In October 1942 Charlie embarked for the Middle East with the 2nd/24th. He had been promoted from a Private to a Corporal but there is no clue in his file of where he was stationed. Tobruk, the most iconic Middle Eastern location

in Australia's history of the war, is not mentioned anywhere in his file that I can see. However Charlie is mentioned in the Roll of Honour for the Rats of Tobruk and in that roll, his rank is cited as Lance Sergeant. Two other CRB men in this book were Rats of Tobruk – Noel Keil and Bill Carpenter.

However his archive is very clear in that he arrived back in Melbourne in March 1943. Not long after he was sent to Cairns – I suspect to undergo jungle warfare training. In August he arrived at Milne Bay in New Guinea and it was while here, that he was promoted to Acting Lance Corporal. The file does not record his whereabouts but in February 1944 he departed Finschhafen aboard the *Sea Snipe* and disembarked in Brisbane six days later. While he was in Brisbane he copped a two day fine of confined to barracks punishment for being absent without leave for a day. Good on you Charlie! He'd escaped from Ambon and had been one of the Rats of Tobruk and the Army nicks him for wanting a day off.

He was hospitalised twice in Queensland with malaria from June to August 1944, and in March 1945 he was sent on a course for map reading and field sketching. I suspect that this was a life-changing experience for this young labourer from Wahgunyah. The course report said that Charlie was cheerful and intelligent. Anyone who knew him would support these comments. It went on to say *"Although this student possessed little knowledge of the subject he applied himself diligently to all phases of the course and made very good progress in field work and theory"*. Was this the first seed planted for Charlie's future career as a Licensed Surveyor?

Charlie's war was not quite over. He was despatched to Morotai in NEI (Netherlands East Indies) in May 1945. His promotion to Lance Sergeant had just been confirmed. In June he was wounded in action with a shrapnel wound to his leg but the archive does not identify his location. I suspect it was in Borneo because he was evacuated to a Hospital Ship which landed at Tarakan (just off the coast of Borneo) and then took him on to Morotai, from where he was flown back to the mainland. The file calls it 'emplaned' and when he got off he 'deplaned'. He was flown to Townsville via Lae. During the next three months, Charlie was shifted by air ambulance and train ambulance from hospital to hospital till he eventually arrived in Ballarat.

It was his left leg that was wounded – his calf and his tibia. He seemed to have spent the best part of nine months in hospital and he finished up in Heidelberg. He was discharged in August 1946.

Charlie began with the CRB in 1946 as a chainman. He was discharged from the Army and walked into the Exhibition Building and asked for a job. A fortnight later he was in South Gippsland working on the Bass highway – surrounded by



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Charlie Robinson,
Assistant Principal
Surveyor, CRB, 1970

mosquitoes and dense tea tree scrub. He thought at the time that he might have done better had he stayed in Borneo. He became a surveyor in 1950 when he obtained his Licensed Surveyor qualification under the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme for ex-service personnel. He rose through the surveying ranks from Assistant Senior Engineering Surveyor to the Title Survey Officer and finally, the Assistant Principal Surveyor.

He had a long career in surveying and was an extremely popular character. He was friendly and down-to-earth. He was an avid supporter of

Freedom From Hunger and Austcare and, sadly, the Fitzroy Football Club. He was also active in the Municipal Officers' Association at State and Federal levels. Charlie was also a committee member and President of the VicRoads Association.

Charlie died in July 2002.

Juris Bruns

Juris served in the Royal Australian Engineers during the Vietnam War. I would be grateful to receive any information about him – where he worked and with whom. Does any one know his contact details?

Does anyone have a photograph of him? Any information would be wonderful.



And now for something beautiful

Vincent van Gogh

Vincent van Gogh is my favourite artist. I have loved his paintings from the first time I saw them as a boy. They transfixed me. It was as if his joy for life – and his anguish – reflected from the canvas. His paintings move me more than those of anyone else and I find his life story incredibly sad. What a tragedy that a man with such creative imagination should die so young – and alone. I saw a session on television relating to eyesight and it was mentioned that van Gogh may have had a condition with his sight that made his vision shimmer. If only I could have it.

And then back in the 1960s I heard Don McLean sing Vincent and the words were perfect. I find them moving. One of the great songs. The paintings I have included together with the lyrics of Vincent show van Gogh's depictions of his starry, starry nights including the Night Café.

I find the Night Café very moving. Despite its beautiful colours it seems so lonely. Van Gogh painted it in Arles in September 1888. It shows five customers sitting at tables with a waiter standing by the billiard table. There is a half-curtained door at the rear leading to another room. The perspective draws the viewer towards the door. The café was an all-night haunt for the down and outs and prostitutes who can be seen slouched over the tables



drinking absinthe. Van Gogh wrote to his brother, Theo, saying that the owner of the cafe had taken so much money from him it was time to take his revenge by painting the place.

It is simply wonderful art, wonderful poetry and wonderful music.

What could be more beautiful than this?

*Starry, starry night
Paint your palette blue and grey
Look out on a summer's day
With eyes that know the darkness in my soul*

*Shadows on the hills
Sketch the trees and the daffodils
Catch the breeze and the winter chills
In colours on the snowy, linen land*

*Now, I understand what you tried to say to me
And how you suffered for your sanity
And how you tried to set them free
They would not listen, they did not know how
Perhaps they'll listen now*

*Starry, starry night
Flaming flowers that brightly blaze
Swirling clouds in violet haze
Reflect in Vincent's eyes of china blue*

*Colours changing hue
Morning fields of amber grain
Weathered faces lined in pain
Are soothed beneath the artist's loving hand*

*Now, I understand, what you tried to say to me
How you suffered for your sanity
How you tried to set them free
They would not listen, they did not know how
Perhaps they'll listen now*

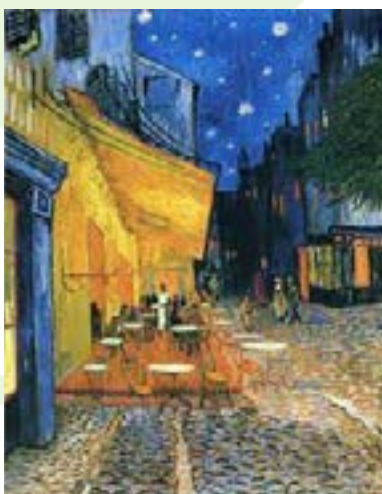
*For they could not love you
But still your love was true
And when no hope was left inside
On that starry, starry night*

*You took your life as lovers often do
But I could have told you, Vincent
This world was never meant for one
As beautiful as you*

*Starry, starry night
Portraits hung in empty halls
Frameless heads on nameless walls
With eyes that watch the world and can't forget*

*Like the strangers that you've met
The ragged men in ragged clothes
The silver thorn of bloody rose
Lie crushed and broken on the virgin snow*

*Now, I think I know what you tried to say to me
How you suffered for your sanity
How you tried to set them free
They would not listen, they're not listening still
Perhaps they never will*



Trivia and didactic whimsies

Prime Minister's Problems

Some time ago, Australia Post created a stamp with a portrait of the Prime Minister of Australia.

However it was unsuccessful in that it would not stick to envelopes. The Prime Minister concerned was outraged and he demanded an investigation. Not unnaturally for a politician, he wanted his face on every letter in the country.

After two months of investigation and a \$2.73 million enquiry, a special Royal Commission presented the following findings:

1. The stamp was in perfect order.
2. There was nothing wrong with the adhesive.
3. People were spitting on the wrong side of the stamp.

Time to get up

One morning a mother was trying to wake up her son. "Wake up now! It's time to go to school."

"I don't want to go to school," the son replied.

His mother said, "Give me two reasons why you don't want to go to school."

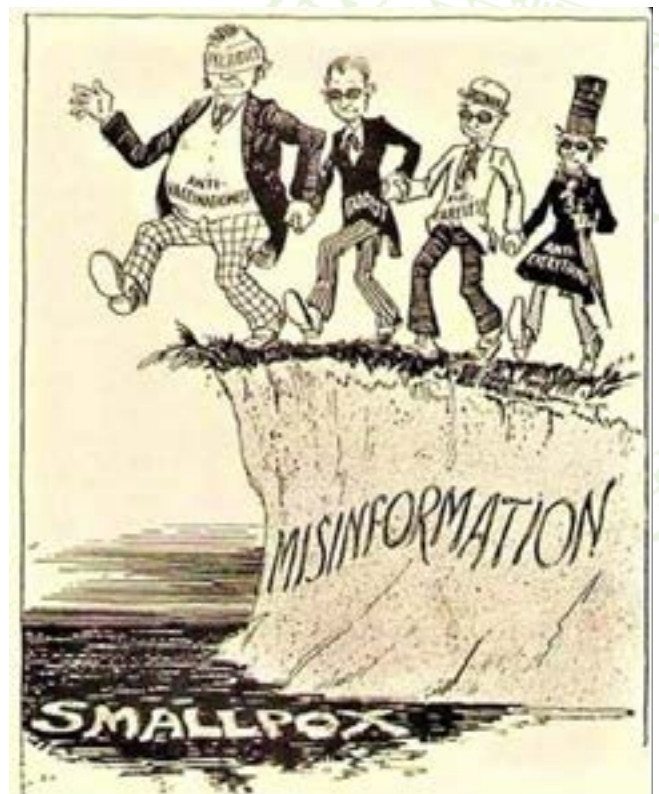
"Okay. One, all the children hate me. Two, all the teachers hate me."

"Not good enough," the mother replied.

"Fine," the son said. "Then you give me two good reasons why I SHOULD go to school."

"One, you're 50 years old. Two, you're the principal of the school."

This cartoon was created in the 1930s – nothing has changed.



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