

VicRoads Association

Newsletter No. 234



Painting by Eugene von Guérard 'Tower Hill'

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,

I am writing this newsletter on the eve of the Federal Election. I don't know how you feel but I am fed up with it. Six weeks is too long for a campaign. I am also sick of the relentless and dubious advertising in all the media and the unruly and rude behaviour of the television reporters.

Our politicians keep praising democracy as the best system of government in the world and I'm sure that we agree – especially our Australian version of compulsory, preferential voting with a universal franchise. I also like the idea – in the main – of turning up to vote. I realise that some people, for various reasons, can't. I do get a sense of participation in doing it.

But there are democracies and there are democracies. Democratic elections have recently been held in the Philippines but we can be sure that the resultant government will be autocratic rather than democratic in nature. Even Vladimir Putin stands for election as do many despotic presidents around the world.

There are four types of government that I can think of – democracy, theocracy, monarchy and totalitarian. Perhaps you could add oligarchy to this list – such as in Myanmar where an elite group of army generals rule the country.

Democracy is a complicated thing. Most scholars state that there are two main types of democracy including direct and representative.



"How can someone who blows a hundred million on a political campaign be fiscally responsible?"

However, several governments offer their own specific version of democracy.

A direct democracy is one where the people run everything. For changes in laws and government procedures, the people vote directly rather than having anyone represent them. Everything from fixing the roads to raising taxes requires the people's vote. If a large group thinks something is an issue, it can be brought to the government. These sorts of democracies are hard to find but Switzerland is close to the best example. The government of Switzerland uses popular initiatives, optional referendums and mandatory referendums to oppose amendments and demand bills. The nation also votes on all issues through popular vote. By the way, Switzerland held a referendum as recently as 1971 when 65% of male voters approved the right of Swiss women to vote and stand for election. Can you believe it?

By far the most common form of democracy across the world is representative democracy. This is one where people vote for a representative – at the regional, legislative and executive levels. This small group of politicians are supposed to represent the needs and thoughts of the people that voted them in. Depending on the governing body, a representative government can be broken down into different subsets as follows.

A **parliamentary democracy** is when power is vested to the legislative branch of the government through the parliament and the prime minister. These governments also have an executive branch but with less power. This is our system. The parliament is broken down into the House of Representatives and the Senate. These houses, along with the prime minister, work to make laws, check government spending and review the work of the government. In Australia, the judicial branch is headed by the Queen. In other parliamentary democratic governments such as India, the head of state is the president.

A **presidential democracy** is different from a parliamentary democracy. In a presidential democracy, the executive branch

has the power. The people elect a president to head the government. However, the president is kept in check by the legislative branch. The United States of America is the most obvious example. The executive branch includes the president and his or her cabinet. Along with the judicial and legislative branch, the three branches of government work to keep checks and balances, but the president has the final say.

I mentioned Vladimir Putin earlier. Strictly, we might be able to say that Russia was once an **authoritarian democracy** where the wealthy and elite directed the power of the government. These regimes adopt the government models that are generally associated with a democracy, including executive and legislative branches, but the government itself is not in the hands of the people – it is a small group of elites who are governing. However, in Russia, Putin has manipulated the system to repudiate any form of democracy and it is now a totalitarian government. If I am poisoned soon, this opinion will be proved.

There are also **religious democracies**. This is where secular laws and the people meet to create the principles of the government. The most common examples today are the Islamic democracies. The laws of Islam are what guide policy creation. The leaders of these democracies follow the teachings of Islam but they are elected to their positions by the people. The governments of Iran and Pakistan are two examples where the executive, judicial and legislative branches of government are guided by the laws of Islam and the Qur'an.

Democracy is far from perfect as Winston Churchill famously said: "democracy is the worst form of government – except for all the others that have been tried."

However like many good quotes this has been misinterpreted. What he actually said was: *"It has been said that democracy is the worst form of Government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time; but there is the broad feeling in our country that the people should rule, and that public opinion expressed by all constitutional means, should shape, guide, and control the actions of Ministers who are their servants and not their masters."*

This conveys a completely different meaning. Churchill was not saying that he thought democracy is the worst form of government except for all others. Indeed, he was rejecting that notion in favour of popular rule. And if you look at his speeches over many decades, you find a consistent theme in support of democracy as an ideal that he cherished.

So despite my disenchantment over the last six weeks, we should celebrate our system of government which works to create a government that values individuals. Whatever happens tomorrow, our democracy will be a winner.

David Jellie,
Chairman and Editor

What's coming up

Occasional Lunches at Shoppingtown Hotel 12 noon

Our next lunch will be held on Monday 20 June 2022. There is no longer a requirement to contact Kelvin York – just turn up. Future lunches are 8 August, 10 October, 7 November and 6 February 2023.

Annual Golf Day

Unfortunately, we have had to defer this until later in the year owing to work being carried out at Green Acres Golf Club in Kew. The club is replacing all the greens and installing a fairway sprinkling system. We expect to shift this day to October or November, depending on progress, or we may relocate to another course. We will keep you posted.

Dinner at Glen Waverley RSL 6pm Thursday 6 October

We will provide details closer to the date.

Benalla/Shepparton Trip

We will provide details closer to the date – expected to be September or October.

Christmas Lunch

This has been booked for Monday 12 December at Glen Waverley RSL.

What's been happening

Trip to Warrnambool Region 10, 11, and 12 May 2022.

A party of 20 people participated in this trip exploring the volcanic plains of Victoria. We enjoyed good company and lots of laughs and were blessed with three lovely autumn days with no wind. Believe me when I say having three days in the Western District without wind is remarkable. In my youth in Colac, I rode about two miles to school – uphill into a western gale – every day!

On Wednesday night, we dined at the Lady Bay Hotel in Warrnambool where a further 20 of our local colleagues joined us for dinner. I extend our thanks to Ted Goddard who assisted in making these arrangements and making the night such a success.

I have sent some notes to all those members with email which described the places we visited – including the volcanoes and maars at Red Rock (near Colac), Mount Leura/Sugarloaf and Lakes Bullen-Merri and Gnotuk (at Camperdown) and Tower Hill (near Koroit). So I won't go into detail about the itinerary but there are a few things I want to mention.

On Wednesday morning, Glenn Blundell from Regional Roads Victoria addressed us about the high incidence of truck rollovers in the timber industry in the western reaches of Victoria. Portland is the world's largest hardwood chip export site. It also exports hardwood and softwood logs.



At the Botanic Gardens in Camperdown – laid out by William Guilfoyle – overlooking Lake Gnotuk.

The photographs on the next page give you some idea of the scale of the enterprise in Portland.

Logs are delivered to Portland by B-Double trucks and it has been found that there is a much higher incidence of rollovers in this area than elsewhere. The rollovers occur in what Glenn terms 'The Green triangle' shown in the map below.

He showed slow-motion movies of rollovers. The rollover starts at the rear bogey and its momentum then moves to the centre bogey which in turn moves on to the prime mover. The interesting thing is that the driver in the prime



The group at Coragulac House where we had lunch on the first day of the excursion.

mover has no warning of what is happening behind him. The torsion in the system is such that the rear bogey has completely overturned while the prime mover is perfectly upright and the driver has no awareness that he is about to be turned over as a consequence.

From 2011 to 2020 there were 98 crashes of his type with 10 fatalities. The timber industry far exceeded other industries in this type of crash. 70% of rollovers occurred on curves and 30% on straights. Rollover Prevention Programs have been introduced with the participation of all stakeholders to make drivers aware of the dangers. These include proper care in stacking loads, heights of loads, securing loads, the configuration of loads, speed management, signage at high risk locations and encouragement for drivers by acknowledging their positive achievements.

Glenn and his team should be congratulated on the work they are doing and we wish them every success.

The other point I want to mention is included in 'And Now for Something Beautiful' later in this newsletter.



This is a properly loaded B-Double. The load is secured and higher in the middle.

New members

I am delighted to welcome the following people as new members of the Association.

Robyn Robb started work with the CRB at Head Office in Kew in 1969 and, apart from a brief stint in the Prospect Hill Road office, worked there until retiring from the Department of Transport in 2022.

Andrew Scotnicki worked in Materials Division from 1972 to 1982.

Invitation for Divisional representatives

We are keen to get more feedback from members who worked in one of the eight rural Divisional CRB offices. Feedback from each Division would be published in the Newsletters and placed on the VicRoads Association website www.vicroadsassociation.org

Feedback could include:

- historical articles (including significant projects, bridges, planning studies, etc)
- tourist-related events in their region,
- reunion lunches/dinners,
- Divisional 'characters' from the past,
- anything else of interest

We are looking for members who wish to nominate to undertake this task for a particular rural Region. If you are interested, could you please advise Jim Webber on 0412 064 527 or jimwebber@optusnet.com.au

Apology

In Newsletter 232, I reported the death of Sue Phizaklea. I am delighted to inform you that this is incorrect. It was Sue's sister who died. I sincerely apologise for any distress I may have caused. It is an editor's nightmare and I want to thank Peter McCullough for straightening me out.

Vale

It is with the deepest sadness that I inform you of the death of the following people.

Noel Anderson

Our beloved Noel has died after a hard struggle over the last six months or so. I sent a note out on the day of the notice of his death in the paper and was immediately inundated by messages of condolence. Ray Brindle said that he was one of those people that you expected to live forever.

I will write a more expansive obituary of Noel in the next newsletter and a history of him flying in Lancaster bombers over Europe in the Second World War. He was an institution of the CRB and his death seems to signify the passing of a generation.

Noel and Margaret were frequent attendees at our social functions and their love for one another was palpable – and touching. They have had a wonderful life together. Noel's son Rick, is also a member of the Association. To Margaret and Rick and families, we extend our sympathies and our true love and respect for Noel.

Sue Kersting

Sue died on 15 May 2022 after a long illness. She was 71.

Sue was a lovely person. I first met her as a customer at House in Burke Road Camberwell where she was always able to persuade me to buy something appropriate. She was very persuasive. Sue had a varied career in retail, the airline industry and hairdressing and her brilliant smile won many hearts – including mine. She also ran her own business known as the Little Shop Upstairs.

We extend our sincere sympathy to Mal, Jaclyn and Stacey and their families.

News from Department of Transport

Eastern Freeway

Graffiti can be offensive in many ways. It can be threatening, insulting and mindlessly unsightly and in most countries, it is illegal. Public authorities in Australia spend more than \$2 billion annually removing graffiti and the Victorian Department of Transport (DoT) is no exception.

An acquaintance recently wrote to the DoT regarding the amount of rubbish and graffiti along the Eastern Freeway and received the following response.

'I understand your concerns about unsightly rubbish and graffiti along the Eastern Freeway.

DoT is committed to keeping the state's arterial road reserves clean and tidy, and promptly removes any litter that poses an immediate safety hazard to road users, such

as material found in traffic lanes. Please note that it is DoT's practice to collect litter prior to grass mowing and garden bed maintenance. DoT recently removed a large amount of weeds and built up silt along the Eastern Freeway. The next litter collection and weed spraying is due for completion by the end of May 2022.

DoT's policy is to remove graffiti that is considered to be racist, offensive or unsafe, as soon as practicable. Other graffiti is prioritised for removal depending on its size and location on the road network. As there are many road maintenance demands at any given time, work that has the greatest impact on improving public safety is given the highest priority. Since March 2022, we have removed over 4,500 square metres of graffiti along the Eastern Freeway. Unfortunately, in many cases, the vandalism reappears within a week of graffiti being removed.'

News from members

Nick Szwed

I think I am fairly safe in saying that Nick Szwed is one of VicRoad's – and our Association's - most well-known characters. Everyone knows Nick for his energy, enthusiasm and impish sense of humour. He is a member of our Association's committee and the driving force behind our web-page. I am especially grateful to Nick for the willing assistance he gave to me when I published my two books in 2020. Everyone loves Nick!



A recent photo of Nick.

He has had a truly peripatetic career with the CRB, RTA and VicRoads. He was granted a cadetship by the CRB in 1967 and graduated from the University of Melbourne in 1971 with a Master of Engineering Science degree where he studied freeway merging funded by a grant from the Australian Road Research Board. He started his career in 1972 in the Traffic Engineering Division at the CRB and in 1977 he spent a year working on the Hume Freeway Project.

In 1978 he was appointed Team Leader of Victoria's first road safety Traffic Black Spot program and has maintained a keen interest in road safety ever since including policy development, new initiatives, speed management, traffic planning/management and research. In 1982 he was seconded to the Ministry of Transport on special projects. At other times, he worked on road design and

the redevelopment of the Driver Licensing System. He resigned in 2004 but continued working with VicRoads on a consulting basis as well as for Boroondara Council and Monash University Accident Research Centre.

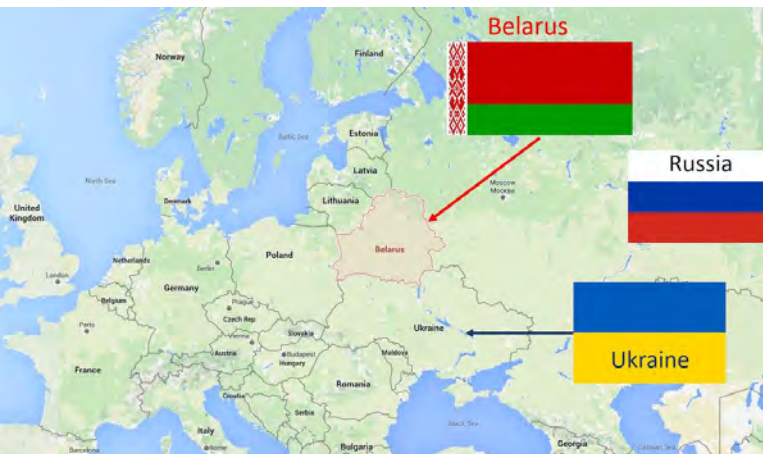
He has always been involved in the professional advancement of engineering both during his career and after. He was Secretary and later, President, of the RTA Group of the Association of Professional Engineers Australia, and from 2014 to 2021 he was the President of the Australia/New Zealand branch of the Institute of Traffic Engineers.

A couple of years ago, during the first lockdown of the pandemic, Nick gave a Zoom presentation about the country of his birth, Belarus. I loved it and pestered him to tell his life story so that I could publish it in our newsletter. He has risen to the challenge and this is Nick's story which he has called 'We Arrived with Nothing'.

I think we should first of all locate Belarus on the map of Europe.

Belarus is a land locked country bordered by Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Latvia and Estonia. It has a population of around 10 million people and its capital city in Minsk. An autocratic dictator, Alexander Lukashenko, a staunch ally of President Vladimir Putin in Russia, rules Belarus.

Mass protests erupted across the country following the disputed 2020 Belarusian presidential election in which Lukashenko sought a sixth term in office. Neighbouring countries, Poland and Lithuania (and Lithuania), do not



My parents were born in different villages in Belarus in the 1920s. The German Nazis invaded Belarus on their way to Russia in 1941. My mother told me a story of the German arrival on a sunny summer's day when the priest had come to the village to hold an outdoor service – as there was no church in the village. The congregation was kneeling when they saw the Germans approaching and they stayed kneeling, praying to God. The Germans took a good look at them and continued on quietly. The reason I remember this story so strongly is that the Germans destroyed about 80% of the towns and villages in Belarus, wherever they met resistance. Mum's village survived.

Pretty soon the Germans came back and conscripted all the able-bodied people to work on German farms and in factories to assist with their war efforts. They were taken away in rail wagons like this.



recognize Lukashenko as the legitimate president of Belarus. Further afield, Lukashenko is not recognized as the legitimate president by the European Union, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States. They have imposed sanctions against Belarus because of the rigged election and political oppression during the ongoing protests in the country. Further sanctions were imposed in 2022 following the country's role in the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

This is Nick's story.

We Arrived with Nothing

'My parents were post-war refugees from Europe arriving in Australia in 1950 with nothing but a couple of bags and two infants.

My ancestry goes back to at least the 18th Century where my forefathers lived in the region where Belarus is today. Prior to that, I may have had Swedish ancestors because in the 18th, 14th and 9th Centuries the Swedes invaded that region. In Slavic languages, my surname "Szwed" means "the Swedish man" – so watch out for the Viking in me!

My parents ended up on the same farm in Germany. They married and had their first baby, my older sister, as prisoners of war in Germany. After the defeat of Germany, all prisoners were released. My mother told me of another important moment that could have changed our whole future. All my parents' Belarusian friends were heading for the Russian compound to be taken home. My parents followed reluctantly because they did not like the Soviets. When they entered the compound, the barbed-wire gates were slammed shut behind them and armed guards stood in front of them. They became extremely concerned.

Fortunately, one of Mum's girlfriends had partnered with a Polish man and he had come along with them. He was also a quick thinker. He told Mum and Dad and a few others to absolutely say not a word. He had a Polish passport and when they got to the reception desk, he held out his passport and asked if this was the Polish compound. The Russian official took one look at his passport and told them to get out of there – the Polish Compound was further down the road.

My Dad was keen to leave Europe as soon as possible because he heard that the Russians were sending everyone who had worked for the Germans, to the Gulag in Siberia. He was afraid that if the Russians found out what he had done, they might come after him.



The Viking invasion of Europe in the 9th Century. The Swedes also invaded in the 14th and 18th Centuries.

My Dad had relatives in Uruguay and wanted to go there immediately. But during the medicals when it was discovered that Mum was pregnant with me, they were told she could not go on an ocean voyage until the child was born. My Dad's stress levels went up significantly while he waited for my arrival into the world.

By the time I was born, Australia was considered to be the most desirable location for immigration. We set off by train for Naples, Italy, and boarded the *Hellenic Prince*¹ (named after Prince Charles). I contracted some kind of disease on the journey to Australia and was seriously ill. My mother prayed to God that I wouldn't be buried at sea. I pulled through and we arrived at Station Pier on 25 April 1950 and headed north to Bonegilla by train.



Nick included this photograph taken at Station Pier in the 1950s but the ship may not be the *Hellenic Prince*. It shows new arrivals being transported by train to their initial destinations.

After a stint in Bonegilla, we went to Mildura where my parents worked on the farms and orchards. When Mum and Dad discovered that there were better paid jobs to be had in Melbourne, they decided that Dad should go there with the aim of finding a job and buying some land to build a house. Mum would continue working in Mildura. I reckon I must have developed my love for 40 degree days during my second year of life in Mildura.

Dad got a job in Footscray and learnt to use a metal lathe. He eventually gained a Fitter and Turner Trade Certificate. He heard that there was cheap land available in St Albans, which was on the same train line as Footscray, so he went down there and bought a block of land. St Albans was a small village about 5 km NW of Sunshine which was the western edge of the metropolitan area. He then started to build a house with the help of his neighbours – that is what they all did. He lived for a while in a wooden crate that had been used to import either a car or a tractor. Keilor and

¹ I have written a small history of *Hellenic Prince* which is included in the Trivia and Didactic Whimsies section at the back of this newsletter.

Sunshine Councils had allowed migrants to occupy partly completed houses while they were building the remainder.

So we arrived from Mildura to what was known at the time as a 'bungalow'. My mother nearly died – the six of us were moving into a two-roomed bungalow. I remember several months after we moved in, a woman Mum knew turned up crying because her husband had lost his job and they were being evicted. Mum told her as there was no other choice, her family would need to move in with us for a while. After all we had two rooms, they could have one and we, the other.

St Albans had a population of less than 900 before the migrants started to arrive. Many post-war refugees, like my parents, headed there and by the end of the 1950s the population had jumped to over 7,000. New primary schools and a high school were built in 1956. Afterwards St Albans continued to provide sanction to refugees, from Vietnam in the 1970s and more recently from Sudan.



A typical crate house in St Albans in the early 1950s.

During my childhood, St Albans was like a small country town, not really part of Melbourne and we all seemed to know each other. Most of us had no extended family and so the neighbours and friends of our parents became our aunts and uncles. Our "relatives" came from many different countries, so we grew up with diversity and inclusion as a natural part of life. Seventy years later we still hold annual reunions with the kids who went to school in St Albans in the 1950s and 60s.

Even though my parents had little schooling opportunity in their childhood, all four of their children got the benefit of free education in Australia and went on to professional careers.'

I cannot heap enough praise on Nick's parents. Their story of survival in such dire circumstances is truly heroic. Australia has been enriched by people like them. Although they arrived with nothing, look at their legacy of four children with professional careers. Australia owes these modest people a great debt.

Kelvin York

Kelvin wrote to me including a note written by the late Noel McFadyen, regarding the origin of our Occasional lunches. This is what Noel wrote:

'During 1983, the Country Roads Board organization was remodelled - titles of positions changed and the positions were advertised in a long exercise of staff review, commencing with the junior positions in the staff structure.

I became aware that many of my friends were badly stressed by having to apply for the equivalent position to that which they held, in some cases, for years, and decided to try a luncheon at one of the Kew dining rooms to generate mutual support.

The first Occasional Luncheon was held on Friday 18 November, 1983 at the Clifton Hotel, Kew Junction, attended by Neil Guerin, Bill Thomas, Norm Haylock, Peter Jeffreys, Andrew McGalliard, Bruce Addis, Geoff Hunt, David Nicholson, Roger Gamble and myself.

Luncheons were then held, each with a different organizer at approximately two month intervals until I retired in January, 1987. Richard Howland took over arranging the luncheons, and later different people were allocated to the task with venues changing to the Village Tavern, Denmark Street, and later to the Malaysia Village Restaurant, High Street, Kew.

When Richard retired late in 1988, the lunches lapsed for a short time, and then resumed in September 1989, at the Sentimental Bloke, Bulleen, as an activity for members of the CRB Retired Persons Association (now VicRoads Association).

The venue changed to the Shopping Town Hotel Bistro, Williamsons Road, Doncaster, on 20 July, 1990, and lunches have continued there since then. There have now been more than sixty luncheons over nearly ten years held at the Shopping Town Hotel Bistro.

ND McFadyen, 13 June, 2000

Jim Webber

When Jim was preparing a note about Noel Allanson's cricket career – published in the last newsletter – he made contact with Graeme Deany. You may remember that Noel was the inaugural captain of the 1962 CRB cricket team that played against the Public Works Department, Tasmania, in Ulverstone.

He arranged for several members of that 1962 team - Graeme, Bill Saggars, Gary Edwards, Alastair Robinson and myself - to meet for lunch in Eltham close to Graeme's home. Graeme worked in the Property Section at the CRB.

Graeme, who is a son of Stuart Deany, the CRB's Asphalt Engineer from 1967 to 1973, had a magnificent sporting



Members of the CRB Cricket Team, 1962.

Left to right: Jim Webber, Bill Saggars, Alastair Robinson, Graeme Deany and Gary Edwards.

career. He played District cricket with the Fitzroy Cricket Club, where he played 49 games for the 1st XI which included the District Premiership in 1960/1961. Team mates included the Harvey brothers (Neil, Ray and Brian) and Jack Potter.

However, baseball was his major claim to sporting fame, where he played for the Fitzroy Baseball Club. He was a member of the Victorian Claxton Shield team for 11 consecutive seasons from 1956 to 1966. Graeme played in 72 of a possible 74 games and was a member of the winning Claxton Shield team on four occasions.

He was selected in the Australian team nine times, including seven years in a row from 1957 to 1963, and won the Helms Award in 1965 for the best player at the Australian Championships. Graeme was inducted into the Baseball Australia Hall of Fame in 2005.



Graeme's Helms Award for the best player in the Australian Baseball Championship, 1965.

The five 1962 cricketers had a great lunch together and Jim is aiming to have another get-together later this year, hopefully involving more players from other CRB cricket teams. He is also preparing an article on the CRB/PWD cricket matches for publication in a future VicRoads Newsletter.

LEST WE FORGET



Major Robert (Bob) Frank Eastick,

MBE, VX39192, 43163

Bob was born in Nhill in 1913 and enlisted in the AIF in January 1941. Bob was attached to the 9th Division Australian Engineers. He was discharged with the rank of Major in October 1945 and shortly afterwards, he married Margaret Ramsay Norman.

I have not been able to find an archive for Bob and there is a conundrum I have yet to solve. He has two service numbers – one for the 2nd AIF and the other for the RAAF. If I can find his file in Canberra, I might be able to solve this puzzle.

The Eastick family in Nhill has a strong representation in Australia's fighting services. Along with Bob, there are Frederick Harold (b. 1889), possibly his father, Frederick John (b. 1923), RAN, Herbert Ronald (b. 1922) Army, John Rodderick (b.1923) Army, Richard Clement (b. 1922) Army, Robert William (b. 1925) RAAF, Thomas Alexander (b. 1920) Army, Victor Thomas (b. 1890) Army, and Vivian Victor (b. 1915) RAAF. I notice that Thomas, a Captain in the Army, is on the Honour Roll of the Rats of Tobruk.

The 9th Division was the fourth division raised in the 2nd AIF. It served in front line combat longer – cumulatively – than any other Australian division and was one of Australia's most decorated units. It was the only 2nd AIF division formed in the United Kingdom, from infantry brigades and support units formed in Australia. Its exploits in the Middle East (including the siege of Tobruk) won praise from both Bernard Montgomery of the Allied forces and Erwin Rommel of the Axis forces. Together with the 6th and 7th Divisions it served in both the Mediterranean and Pacific Theatres.

During 1940, the component units of the 9th Division were sent to the UK to defend it against a possible German invasion. After serving during 1941 and 1942 in the North African Campaign, at the Siege of Tobruk and the first and second battles of El Alamein, the Division returned to Australia. In 1943 and 1944, it served in the New Guinea Campaign and, during 1945, in the Borneo Campaign.

Bob was awarded an MBE in 1947 for meritorious service in Brooketon, Brunei, and Miri (all in Borneo) and Tobruk (in Libya).

Bob's career at the CRB was in bridge construction. He supervised the construction of the Johnston Street Bridge across the Yarra River linking Abbotsford and Kew in 1950-51.



Johnston Street Bridge.

Bob had a colourful and authoritative air about him – befitting a major – and there is a story in the folklore of the CRB about him managing this project. Work used to commence at 7am and Bob always ordered pies for lunch. He went round the job each morning and counted the heads and ordered two pies per person irrespective of whether you liked pies or brought your own lunch. In those days there were people who lived along the banks of the river. One man – a white Russian – lived in a nook in the abutment of the bridge. These people were the real beneficiaries of Bob's largesse. There were pies to burn.

Bob was also involved in the construction of the ill-fated Kings Bridge – he supervised the fabrication of the steel girders for the King Street Bridge. He left the CRB in the 1960s and shifted to Sydney where he started up his own consultancy business.

Bob died in 1999 aged 86.





Painting by Eugene von Guérard 'Tower Hill'

And now for something beautiful

On our recent excursion to Warrnambool, we visited Tower Hill. The landscape is stunning and worthy of contention for its beauty alone.

The Tower Hill crater is about 3.4 kilometres wide and 90 metres high, with bank gradients ranging between 10% and 80%. Within the crater, a series of later volcanic explosions formed a number of scoria cones surrounded by a crater lake. Being a giant maar, Tower Hill is of international geological significance. The Dhauwurdwurrun name for the volcano is Koroitj – obviously the derivation of the name of the nearby small town of Koroit.

Tower Hill's formation is known as a "nested maar", the largest of its type in Victoria. It was created by molten lava pushing its way up through the Earth's crust, before hitting a layer of water-bearing rock, which led to huge explosions. A shallow crater was left, later becoming a lake after it filled with rainwater. Subsequent to this, later eruptions occurred in the centre of the crater-lake, pushing up islands and cone-shaped hills, known as scoria cones.

It is one of the largest eruption points in Victoria. Within the steep-walled tuff ring is a crater with a depth of over 90 metres. Because of the complex nature of its formation and structure, and as one of the largest maars in the world, it is of great geological significance both nationally and internationally.

We stopped at the location where, in 1855, Eugene von Guérard painted his famous scene of Tower Hill which can be seen in Warrnambool's Art Gallery. It took him 52 days to paint. The work shows the volcano crater lake with scoria cones surrounded by native vegetation. It is shown below. It is painted meticulously and it is believed that von Guérard used a single-hair brush to paint some parts of it.

Sadly, through drought and over clearing, the landscape at Tower Hill became pathetically degraded. It was almost totally cleared of vegetation for farming. In 1891, James Dawson wrote to the Camperdown Chronicle as follows:

'On visiting the scene lately, I was amazed and disgusted to find everything altered, the fine trees on the cones and in the craters of the island, all gone excepting half a dozen or so. But what was a thousand times worse that this ruthless destruction of the ornamental timber, the larger portion of the lake is made into a mud pool full of fermenting malarious matter, sufficient to poison the whole neighbourhood and enough to prevent any sensible person from settling near it.'

European settlers came to the area in the late 1830s, attracted by good water supply and fertile soils, and immediately set about clearing the land and grazing cattle. By the 1850s blocks of land were being leased and sold right down to the edge of the lake. Land use became more

intensive with even the steep slopes of the volcano cleared and planted with crops. The remaining timber was cut down and used for fuel leaving an almost barren landscape.

Despite being declared Victoria's first national park in 1892, Tower Hill's decline continued. By the early 1950s any resemblance of the once rich landscape had disappeared through over-farming and use as motor-bike scrambling tracks. In the 1960s, following its designation as a State Game Reserve, serious efforts began to replicate the original vegetation using von Guérard's painting as a guide to replanting using botanists to identify the plant species. By 1981 school children, naturalists and other volunteers had planted 250 000 trees and shrubs at Tower Hill and removed non-native species and weeds and feral animals. Native animal species including koalas, wombats, emus now thrive in the Reserve.

Here are a couple of close up shots of the painting taken by Iris Whittaker on the trip – showing the detail of the work.



Trivia and didactic whimsies

The Hellenic Prince

Nick Szwed mentioned in his story that he and his family came to Australia aboard the *Hellenic Prince*. I decided to investigate this further, and this is what I have come up with.

The *Hellenic Prince* was one of the world's most basic passenger ships. She started out as HMAS *Albatross* in 1928. She was built at Cockatoo Island Dockyard in Sydney Harbour as a humble Australian seaplane carrier. During her lifetime she had many names – some of which are unprintable.



The launching of HMAS *Albatross* in February 1928.



Lowering a Seagull III plane into the water.

She was Australia's first aircraft carrier - designed to carry nine seaplanes which were housed in a large forward hangar. The planes could be lowered to the sea by one of three mounted cranes.

She was a small ship. She displaced 4,800 tons and her length was 135 m and her width, 18.5 m. She was deployed in Australian waters until 1938 when she sailed to the UK and was taken over by the Royal Navy.

Over the next six years HMS *Albatross*, served with great valour and gained several awards of high honour for the brave Atlantic campaign and her valiant 1944 Normandy campaign. It operated patrol and escort duties in the southern Atlantic and, commencing in mid-1942, she also served in the Indian Ocean. By early 1944 she was converted so that she could repair landing craft and other support vessels off two of the most dangerous locations, *Sword* and *Juno* beaches during the Normandy invasion. The *Albatross* managed to return 132 craft back into service in addition to saving another 79 from being a total loss.

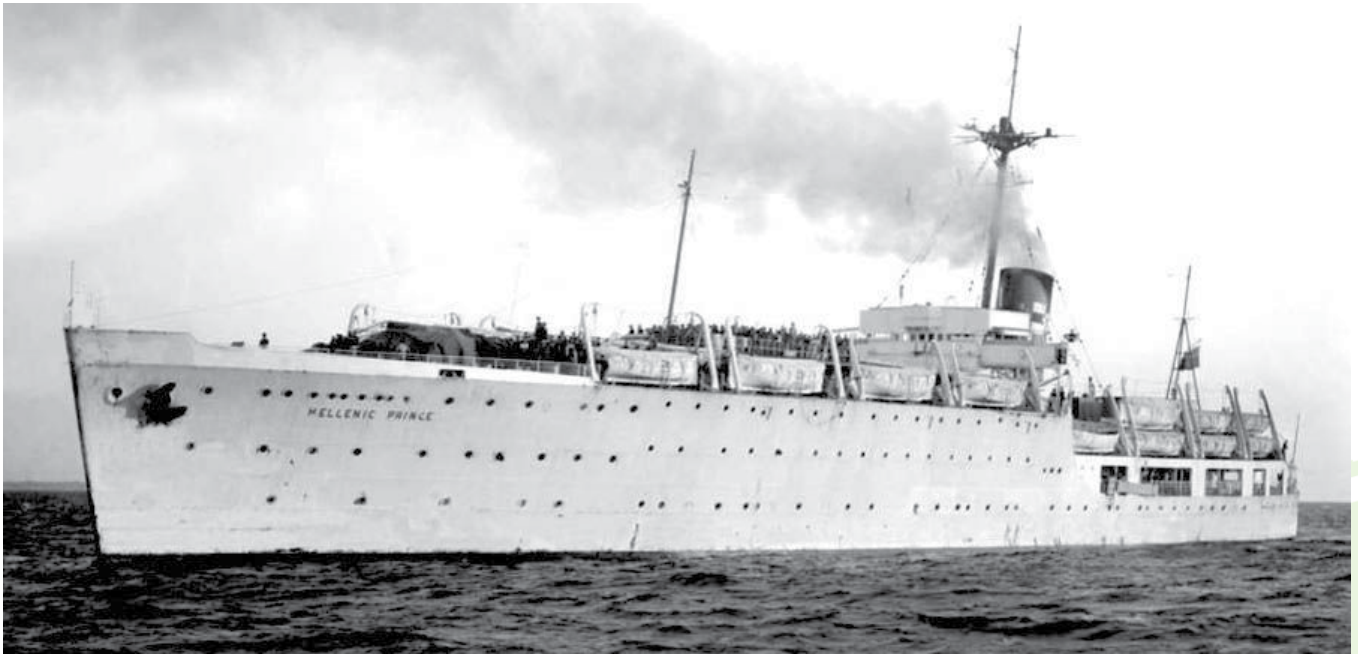
On 11 August 1944, HMS *Albatross* was torpedoed with the tragic loss of 66 personnel. She did not sink. She was towed to Portsmouth and repaired after which she operated as a minesweeper's depot ship. She was de-commissioned in 1945 and this concluded her warship duties.

The *Albatross* was initially sold to a British company with the idea of rebuilding her into a passenger liner to operate on the Australian market. However, the costs were prohibitive and she was placed on the market. She was purchased at a very good price by a British-Greek consortium for their 'China Hellenic Lines' based in Hong Kong, and she was converted to operate migrant services to Australia. On 14 November 1948 she was officially renamed *Hellenic Prince* in recognition of the birth of Prince Charles who was born on that day, and to honour the Greek heritage of his father, Prince Phillip.

In 1949, she was chartered by the International Refugee Organisation as a refugee transport to relocate displaced persons from Europe to Australia. On her first voyage, *Hellenic Prince* arrived in Sydney Harbour in December 1949 with 1,000 passengers.

SS *Hellenic Prince* was certainly no luxury liner. She could accommodate up 1,200 persons in 200 cabins and dormitories with up to 20 persons, as well some eight and four bunk cabins all having the most basic of facilities. On the credit side, the cabins were fully air-conditioned. The spacious dining room seated 560 people and this venue was also used as a lounge area as there were no formal lounges - but there were two cinemas for entertainment. In the three bays of her hangar deck there were three separate hospitals - one for men, one for women, and an isolation ward for sick children who would most likely have come out of one of the concentration camps of post-war Europe.

Not all these journeys to the Promised Land were enjoyable. Many passengers have bitter memories of the voyage,



SS *Hellenic Prince* in Port Phillip Bay. (State Library of Victoria)

describing the shipboard conditions as appalling and overcrowded. The most notorious is described below.

A newsletter titled '*Kangaroo*' and dated January 5, 1951, was distributed on board the *Hellenic Prince* during her 38-day voyage from Bremerhaven via Naples to Melbourne between December 3, 1950 and January 11, 1951. It included an address from the ship's master, Captain P. C. King, expressing his indignation at the behaviour of the passengers and making accusations of mutiny. He refers to a committee of passengers, who evidently formed a delegation to the ship's master. He also cited an account of a passenger being held in the ship's prison for assaulting the Escort Officer. The newsletter included an illustration parodying the cruelty of the captain to the passengers.

Passengers were required to work during the voyage, undertaking cleaning, cooking, mess room duties, and working in the boiler and engine rooms, with payment received in Woodbine cigarettes. Drinking water ran out before the end of the voyage, although bottles of drinking water could be purchased from passengers working in the machinery room for US\$1.00. A freezer breakdown saw precious food stuffs perish. In addition, passengers were refused permission to disembark at the ports of call and when fresh food was finally obtained in Fremantle, it was given to the crew, and not to the passengers. Sea sickness was also common as the ship was rarely level due to a malfunction of the pumps – meaning that they were unable to move the ballast tanks around when needed.

These conditions resulted in increasing passenger discontent which culminated in a hunger strike and the ship's master accused passengers of mutiny. A letter of

complaint was drafted and signed by all passengers and sent to the International Refugee Organisation. On arrival at Bonegilla Migrant Camp, they received news that the *Hellenic Prince* had been inspected and action was taken against Captain King and the company.

This was reported in the Western Australian press as follows.

"Their habits have been filthy and they were a constant worry to the crew," the master of the migrant vessel *Hellenic Prince*, Captain. P. C. King said at Fremantle last night about Syrian, Lebanese and Cypriot peasants aboard the ship.

"Some of them are not even white," Captain King said. "They came on board from the mountains of Lebanon dressed in flowing Arab robes and their standards of living do not conform with those of Western civilisation. I do not know who is responsible for the choice of migrants to Australia, but some of the passengers are poor types."

Capt. King, who is a former British naval officer, said that he was as surprised as some of his passengers-particularly the 29 French men and women on board - when Syrian, Lebanese and Cypriot peasants joined the ship.

"Some appeared to have the mentality of children," he continued. "It has been difficult to keep the ship clean, particularly in their dormitory."

During the past five voyages to Australia, he said, the *Hellenic Prince* had carried about 1,000 displaced persons on each trip. On her present voyage, the ship had 591 fare-paying passengers of eight nationalities.

"The displaced persons gave us less trouble because they were well disciplined," Capt. King said. "Many of the people on this voyage have not the slightest idea of what discipline is. They became obstreperous at Aden when they thought they would not be allowed ashore."

Another officer said that although he had seen thousands of displaced persons coming to Australia, never had he met the like of some of the passengers carried on the present voyage. "It has been a nightmare for us," he declared.

M. Pierre Roussel, the son of a Paris bank director, who is on a holiday visit to Australia, said that he had cancelled his first-class booking on a British liner when he heard of the "luxury" offering on the *Hellenic Prince*. Last week, on behalf of all the other French passengers, he had sent a cablegram to the French Consul in W.A. (Dr. Louis Gelle) asking that the ship be inspected at Fremantle. This was to ensure that "such misrepresentation in Paris could not occur again."

Some of the French migrants who reached Fremantle in the *Hellenic Prince* last night complained about conditions on board the ship during its voyage from Italy. Complaints have been made by French passengers about the other nationalities on board and conditions in the ship. Capt.

King said that a travel agency in Paris had apparently misrepresented the ship as a luxury liner when in fact it was only a third-class passenger vessel. The French passengers had paid only third-class fares about £130 from Naples to Australia, but because of the mis-understanding they had been given preferential treatment. This had led to complaints from other nationalities.

When the *Hellenic Prince* reached Gage Roads² yesterday, Dr J. G. McGlashan, a Commonwealth medical officer, inspected the vessel. He said that he would report on conditions to Dr Gelle. The *Hellenic Prince* was a converted aircraft tender and therefore luxury-liner conditions could not be expected.

Only five passengers disembarked at Fremantle."

The end came, when the SS *Hellenic Prince*, ex HMS/HMAS *Albatross*, was broken up in Hong Kong in 1954 but Captain P. C. King will long be remembered for all the wrong reasons, for he and his crew turned the *Hellenic Prince*'s migrant voyages into a living Hell.

I hope Nick Szwed's family did not have to endure this maltreatment on their journey in March/April 1950.

The Fremantle suburb where the ships docked. Ed.

From the archives

Here are a couple of photos passed to me by Bill Saggars and Nick Szwed.

Bill submitted this one. He wasn't sure of the date and location but it was a reunion lunch of people from the CRB, the MMB and private enterprise who were involved in planning.



From left to right: Bill Saggars, Anton Pommers, Rob Cockburn, Kevin Hine, Tony Fry, Bob Evans, Don Pritchard, Sven Ericksson, Bob Lee and Neil Guerin.

Nick submitted the one below. It was taken at a lunch in Camberwell in 2015. Nick took the photo.



From left to right around the table: Ken Ogden, Bridget Cramphorn, Ray Brindle, George Wittingslow, Darrell Bowyer, Bruce Hartnet, Bill Saggars, Glen Holdsworth, Ross Gordon, John Gaffney, Noel Anderson, Jim Webber and Malcolm Daff.

Trivia and didactic whimsies continued

I am not responsible for these

To awaken the student sleeping in his class, the English Professor threw a book at him.

"What hit me?" spluttered the student.

"That, my lad," replied the professor, *"was a flying Chaucer."*

When I was in school I was always successful at spelling bees.

Other words I found much harder.

A minister died and waited in line at the Pearly Gates. Ahead of him was a man dressed in sunglasses, a loud shirt and jeans. St Peter addressed the man.

"Who are you, so that I may know whether or not to admit you to the Kingdom of Heaven?"

He replied *"I'm Joe Cohen, taxi-driver."* St Peter consulted his list, smiled and said to the taxi-driver *"Take this silken robe and golden staff and enter the Kingdom"*. The taxi-driver then entered the Kingdom of Heaven with his robe and staff.

Next it was the minister's turn. He stood erect and boomed out, *"I am Joseph Snow, pastor of Saint Mary's for the last 43 years"*. St Peter consulted his list. He said to the minister, *"Take this cotton robe and wooden staff and enter the Kingdom"*.

"Just a minute" said the minister. *"That man was a taxi-driver and he gets a silken robe and golden staff. How can this be?"*

"Up here, we work by results" said St Peter.

"While you preached, people slept; while he drove, people prayed".

Just before the election, a politician visited a remote rural town and asked the citizens what the government could do for them.

"We have two big needs," said the Mayor.

"First, we have a clinic but no doctors."

The politician whipped out his mobile phone, spoke for a while and then said, *"I have sorted it out. A doctor will arrive here tomorrow. What is your other need?"*

"We have no mobile phone reception at all in our town."

A tourist in rural Ireland spoke to a local from his car:

"Excuse me, I wonder if you can tell me the quickest way to get to Donegal?"

The local said: *"Are you walking or driving?"*

The tourist replied: *"I'm driving"*

The local said: *"That is the quickest way!"*

A young boy had an ear infection and had to go to the paediatrician. The doctor examined him in a professional manner.

He asked the boy, *"Is there anything you are allergic to?"*

The lad Little nodded and whispered in his ear.

Smiling, the paediatrician wrote out a prescription and handed it to the boy's mother. She tucked it into her purse without looking at it.

As the pharmacist filled the order, he remarked on the unusual food-drug interaction the boy must have.

Little Johnny's mother looked puzzled until he showed her the label on the bottle. As per the doctor's instructions, it read: *"Do not take with broccoli."*

A young man went to the clinic complaining of pain.

"Where are you hurting?" asked the doctor.

"You have to help me, I hurt all over", said the man.

"What do you mean, all over?" asked the doctor, *"be a little more specific."*

The man touched his right knee with his index finger and yelled, *"Ow, that hurts."*

Then he touched his left cheek and again yelled, *"Ouch! That hurts, too."*

Then he touched his right earlobe, *"Ow, even THAT hurts"*, he cried.

The doctor checked him thoughtfully for a moment and told him his diagnosis.

"You have a broken finger."

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