

VicRoads Association

Newsletter No. 236



The Namib Desert, Namibia

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Dear Members,

I had a very warm response about the last newsletter featuring Latvia, especially the story of Juri Strante – for which I can take no credit because Juri wrote it. But the response that touched me most was from Queensland of all places. I send the newsletter to an old friend, Les Kilmartin, who is a bit of a pedant and he would insist that I really mean a long-standing friend. That is true – but he can't deny that he is also old – so I am sticking to my guns. Les lives in Carlton but he originally hailed from Brisbane. When he read the newsletter, he passed it on to a family friend, Colleen Blums, whose husband, Peter, was born in Latvia. After reading the newsletter, Colleen wrote to me.

'Dear David

Thank you for your beautiful story about Juri Strante. It was very moving and similar in many ways to that of my late husband Peter and his parents.

Peter's parents were separated when they fled the Communist takeover of Latvia, but they eventually found each other again in a displaced persons camp in Germany.

With little food, a fear of being sent back to Latvia and an uncertain future, times were harsh in the camp, made worse by Peter becoming very ill and needing to be hospitalized in Germany.

Peter's father, Ansis (Jack), came to Australia ahead of the rest of the family in the late 1940s. He went to work for the Forestry Department in Imbil, near Gympie, in Queensland. When reunited, the family lived in a tent in the forest. It sounds harsh but Peter and his parents recalled it as a very happy time; safe, fresh food, a cow named 'Christmas' for milk, and work.

Jack and Mutti scraped together enough money to buy a block of land in Lindum so 'Jack' travelled to Brisbane every weekend to build their family home.

By some quirk of fate Peter's mum had studied English as a schoolgirl, so she had some basic language skills when they arrived. Peter's dad, Jack, spoke several languages but English wasn't one of them. Ultimately, his mispronunciations became part of our family lingua franca, not very helpful to his command of English but a source of great fun. Peter also spoke several languages. It was as a matter of great pride to his mother that his Latvian language skills were generally much better than his peers. Mutti enjoyed the envy of the other Latvian mothers!



Peter Blums

The rest of the story is almost identical to Juri's, including the longing for the 'old Latvia'. The Latvian social scene in Brisbane was the same with 'Jani' in June, end of year 'Kultura Dienas' (Culture Days) known locally as KDs etc, folk dancing (which Peter refused to join). We went to many of these events held at Latvian House in Buranda. Peter's two cousins still do.

Peter and I managed to visit Latvia in 2008. He was always a proud Australian but equally a proud 'son of Latvia'. Thank you again David. Peter and his parents have all passed away so your article about Juri has reminded me of some precious memories.

*Best wishes
Colleen Blums'*

I passed Colleen's letter on to Juri and he responded as follows:

'Hallo David

Thank you for your note yesterday, and also thank you for sending the Newsletter last week. I was very surprised by the Latvian content and the interesting articles.

What's coming up

Occasional Lunches at Shoppingtown Hotel 12 noon

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

Dinner at Glen Waverley RSL Thursday 6 October at 6pm

Ken Vickery is our contact for this function. If you wish to come, please contact Ken on kenvickery@tpg.com.au or call him on 0409 561 168. Family and friends are most welcome. We will put out a reminder closer to the date.

Briefing on the North East Link Project Monday 17 October at 10.30am

A briefing on the project will be held at the Watsonia Information Hub, 17 Watsonia Rd, Watsonia. The briefing (including questions and answers) is expected to last 90 minutes. There is no limitation on the size of the group but if you wish to attend, please contact Jim Webber on 0412 064 527 or jimwebber@optusnet.com.au

We will indicate a restaurant or hotel in the area for lunch.

Benalla/Shepparton Trip Thursday 17 November – Friday 18 November

The plan is as follows:

Thursday 17 November: Drive to Benalla in the morning and meet for lunch (venue to be advised). At 2pm we commence a tour of the LS Precast facility which will last for 90 minutes. Free time afterwards although the local gallery is well worth a visit. In the evening we will have dinner with present and Ex-CRB/ VicRoads staff from region (venue to be advised). We stay overnight in Benalla.

Friday 18 November: Breakfast in Benalla, then drive to Shepparton and meet at the Shepparton Art Museum (open 10am - 4pm). At around 12noon we will take lunch at the Museum Café, then free afternoon – possible visits to Shepparton Motor Museum, Shepparton Heritage Centre, Gallery Kaiela, Bangerang Cultural Centre, and then return to Melbourne.

Please advise Jim Webber on 0412 064 527 or jimwebber@optusnet.com.au if you wish to attend.

The tour of LS Precast will require all attendees to wear steel capped boots or shoes. For those without boots/ shoes, we will endeavor to borrow these from other members.

– *We appeal to members who own steel capped safety boots, shoes or gumboots to lend them to us. If you can help, please advise Jim so that we can pick them up and return them to their owners after the trip.*

Annual Golf Day Friday 2 December 2022

The 8th Annual VicRoads Golf Day will be held on Friday 2 December at 12 noon at the Green Acres Golf Club in East Kew. The 2021 winner was Roy Gilmour.

The course upgrade (greens and irrigation) is scheduled to be completed by the end of October. The above date will not change irrespective of the state of the upgrade works.

Please contact Jim Webber on jimwebber@optusnet.com.au or SMS on 0412064527 by Friday 18 November if you wish to play and if you wish to share a cart.

Christmas Lunch Monday 12 December 2022, 12 noon

This will be held at Glen Waverley RSL. We will provide details closer to the date.

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The other Juris (Brunns), who went to Vietnam, I knew very well in Melbourne. My marble did not get drawn for the Vietnam conscription. I remember my mum being so relieved and saying "We survived one war (in Europe) and thank goodness my son does not have to go to another war in Vietnam".

I enjoyed Colleen's story and I'm curious to know if her husband, Peter, was related to my very good friends called Blums in Jurmala, the seaside suburb 30 minutes by train from Riga, south to Dzintari rail station. I skype Arvids Blums twice each month. Arvids son is Haralds, about 45 years old, and his daughter, Ilze, is around 40 years. Arvids lives in Turaida Iela (street), Jurmala. There can't be too many Blums in Latvia, with a population of under two million in the size of Tasmania – everybody seems to know each other.

In hindsight, after reading the other Latvian stories briefly, I now feel a bit embarrassed as my story was a bit too mushy (crying in my sleep etc.) compared to the adventures in Vietnam and helping the local children.'

I rang Colleen hoping that there was a connection – but alas, there was none.

I have also found another Latvian in our midst – George Rumbens. Zigrid, his wife, wrote to me saying he is prepared to write his story for the newsletter. George's Latvian names are Arnis Juris – the latter being George in Latvian – but he has always been known as George in the workplace. We can look forward to another Latvian story.

David Jellie,
Chairman and Editor

VALE

It is with the deepest sadness that I inform you of the death of the following people. We extend our sympathy to their family and friends.

Peter (Noel) Anderson

It is hard to believe that Noel has finally left us. He was undoubtedly one of the CRB's most beloved staff members and stories abound about his kindness, skill and mischievousness. When I put out a note about Noel's death, Ray Brindle seemed to sum it up. He responded 'I suppose we should have expected this, but Noel was one of those men who seemed like they'd go on for ever. I am deeply moved to hear of his passing.'

Ray went on to say; 'I was placed under his supervision in Plans and Surveys in 1963 when I had to do Strength of Materials again because I liked it so much (not). I learned more about drafting that year than I learned at university, and also got a taste of how to fit into a work routine. Noel seemed to me to be old even then, but he would have been only in his late thirties. The illusion of great age was only superficial (not much hair, even then) – he had a youthful humour and was as fit as they come. We had a common interest: he was a runner with St Stephens and I was with East Melbourne Harriers. I recall that he often walked (or did he run?) to Kew from his home in Burwood.

Out of the blue, Noel would come out with little epithets ("If two skins are fourpence..."; "He was sitting in the bath with a soul full of hope, or at least I think that was what he said") and he taught me little drafting tricks, like his advice when showing me how to do something at my drafting table as he picked up one of my engineer's scales: "Never use a scale as a straight edge – unless it is someone else's".

When I came across Noel many years later, when we were both long retired, we greeted each other: "Ah, Mr. Anderport"; "Hello, Mr Brindnock". This was a shared joke from 1963 when some senior old buffer at the Railways Department got our names mixed up when Noel, Fred Davenport and I went there to discuss designs for the proposed Pascoe Vale overpass. I designed the footpath, my first taste of glory. Though our contacts in later years were few, they were always warm. Like I said previously, Noel always seemed to be there, and I miss him.'

Noel was known by his second name. This practice ran in the family. His father was known as Peter although his first given name was Lens. Noel's funeral service was conducted at St John's Anglican Church in Camberwell nearly 97 years after his baptism there – and he and Margaret were also married there 73 years ago. He visited his sick grandmother as a four year old in hospital when Margaret was born so their association goes back 93 years.

I have included Noel's life story in the Lest We Forget section of this newsletter. However, there are other aspects I would like to mention.

After commencing as a clerk in the CRB in 1948, Noel transferred into the Plans and Surveys Division at the tin shed behind the Exhibition Building as a design draftsman – a job which suited him very well. He studied engineering part time and quite quickly became a well-respected design draftsman and ultimately Superintending Draftsman with a team of about 20 or so draftsmen.

After the CRB relocated to the new head office in Denmark Street Kew, Noel's team was instrumental in the design of the first sections of the Hume Freeway and was at the cutting edge of road and freeway design. With visionary

Vale continued

engineers such as Jack Ross and Ray Moloney, they pioneered the use of computers to calculate longitudinal curvilinear design and cross sections and do the extensive computations for earthwork and pavement material volumes.

Cadet engineers and new draftsmen were given excellent training in road design and most were treated to Noel's sense of humour by being sent down to the plan filing room where they were instructed to ask Mrs Marr for "the long wait" – which they got, usually about 15 minutes! One young lad was convinced by Noel that the Board members liked to meet new recruits for morning tea, but that his career might be affected by his long hair, so the lad went up to Kew Junction to have a haircut – but the Board never turned up. Engineer Rob Aitken recalled that Noel was briefing him on what to do in case of a fire. Noel said the best thing would be to throw a few extra level books on the fire and then get out as quickly as possible.

He wrote texts for teaching surveying, drafting, road design and drainage and was the major author of the CRB Drafting Manual for Roadworks as well as assisting with the writing of the CRB Road Design Manual. He enjoyed writing and attended creative writing classes during his retirement. He wrote a page of diary notes every night before going to bed.

Noel retired from the CRB in 1985 after 37 years of service and for the following 10 years or so worked for local councils and a couple of design and construction consultants. This work suited him as he was able to keep his mind active and pass on design, drafting and surveying skills. He really enjoyed getting out in the field and supervising construction of some of the small projects he had designed.

Noel made enduring friendships at work which extended through his retirement years. He was a loyal supporter of VicRoads Association and attended many of our functions.

Noel was involved in many community activities. He was an avid supporter of Guide Dogs Victoria and trained two guide dog puppies, Zac and Charlotte. He had over 20 other dogs at home on short term stays at various times. He read for Vision Australia on its 3RPH radio broadcasts and was a member of Neighbourhood Watch.

He also read and chatted to his 'Old Blokes' at Mary MacKillop Aged Care – even though he was older than most of them. He also enjoyed the competition and camaraderie of Bennetswood Tennis Club.

Many will remember Noel as an athlete. He was a member of St Stephen's Harriers and regularly competed in running and walking events. He ran over 20 marathons and in later life, he competed in Veterans Athletics. He was the first President of the Veteran Amateur Athletics Association and he and Margaret travelled to New Zealand, America, Canada and Sweden competing. Noel took up cycling and walking in the park with Margaret when the running became too difficult. He rode the 210 km 'Around the Bay in a Day' with his son, Rick, when he was about 75.

Noel loved music and commenced learning piano at 70 years of age, sitting exams to achieve Grade 4 status in 2000 at the age of 75. He loved playing the recorder with his children and grandchildren. He loved pencil sketching – especially the trees and the cattlemen's huts in the high country. He also took great pleasure in woodwork. He made all the cupboards and benches in their kitchen and made desks for friends and family.

He enjoyed the church, theology and the liturgical aspect of services, especially Evensong.

Noel is survived by Margaret and his three children Richard (Rick), Christopher and Jane. Rick and Jane also worked for VicRoads. We extend them our sympathies, love and appreciation for sharing such a wonderful husband and father.



Margaret and Noel with guide dog Charlotte and two of her pups – circa 2000



Noel competing for the Harriers – circa 1975

Leo Russell

Leo Russell died early in July (of pneumonia) just short of his 95th birthday.

Sean (John) Cribbin

Sean celebrated his 100th birthday on April 30th. All his family of six children, 13 grandchildren and 11 great grandchildren and partners were present to help him celebrate at St Benedict's Hall, in Burwood.

Relatives from Ireland, the US and interstate made the journey to be with him on this special occasion. The family was so grateful that all the COVID travel restrictions had been lifted.

However, on 5 August Sean passed away – very peacefully – with all his children present.



Sean with shamrocks on his cake - ever the Irishman.

Fay Gilpin

Fay, wife of Graham, died recently after an especially long illness. We extend our sincerest sympathy to Graham and his family.

Bill McConnell

Bill was not a member of the Association but he will be well-known to members especially those connected to Warrnambool Division. He died 10 May 2022. Glyn Jones assisted me in the preparation of this obituary.

Bill joined the CRB after working at the Fletcher Jones factory in Warrnambool for quite a few years. He took up the position as Divisional Accountant. He changed the work style from that of being a money counter to being a financial manager and advisor. He broke down the barriers between engineering and accounting and worked on a one-on-one basis with each supervising engineer to prepare accurate data for forecasting and amending programs. He was much loved by all in the office.

Bill Later took up a position with Deakin University in a similar role there.

Bill had other attributes too. He was a great sportsman winning the Maskell Cup award for the best and fairest in the Hampden League in Western Victoria playing for the Warrnambool Football Club. He was a rover – that is where the nick name Dodger came from. I had a bird's eye view of Bill on the field as I played as a ruckman for Colac in that competition. I can vouch that he was a champion player.

Bill was a consistent representative at Country Week Tennis for many years. Then after retirement he took up cycling - not just pedalling along, but competing internationally. He was rated in Europe as third best in the world in veteran class in 1980.

Bill was not one to talk about his achievements but Glyn was well-qualified. They met in Form 1 at the Warrnambool Technical School in 1951 and Glyn said that Bill was an inspiration and help to so many over the years.

Unfortunately Bill succumbed to brain cancer. He maintained his positive attitude right to the end. Our sincere sympathies go out to his wife Norma, and their two children in Torquay.

News from Members

Bill Sagers

Is Bill Sagers a proud grandfather? You bet!

16 year old Max Sagers, Bill's grandson, is a member of Victoria's National Championship winning Eastern Athletics U18 junior baseball team that will represent Australia in the U18 World Series to be staged in Easley, South Carolina, from July 28 through to August 7.

With national competition in junior baseball organised on a Charter system of local districts, the Eastern Athletics team was selected from a number of baseball clubs in Melbourne's eastern region. By winning the State Championship against three other Victorian Charter teams, the Athletics competed for the Gold Medal Australian Championship held recently in Geelong. They had a dominant 10 – 0 'mercy rule' win against NSW's Cronulla, after a round robin competition involving Charter teams from across Australia.

In the Junior League U18 World Series, the Athletics will participate alongside teams representing the Netherlands, Italy, Taiwan, Argentina, Mexico, Canada and USA states. Max will be able to meet up with his uncle living in Michigan who claims the boys will be 'treated like royalty'.

Team hitting has been Max's strong point, including batting in three of the ten runs scored in the final. A state high-performance coach has praised his natural batting action, and currently, he is in a development squad training for a possible place in a future Melbourne Aces open State team.



Max at Bat and with the Championship Trophy and Flag.

In addition to the U18 Junior League World Series in South Carolina, Max has been selected in the Victorian U16 Baseball Team to play in the National U16 Championships in Radcliffe, Queensland in July.

In the Eastern Athletics team to represent Australia at the junior World Series, Max is one of three representatives from the Melbourne Baseball Club. Being an affiliate of the Melbourne Cricket Club organisation which has a policy recognising significant achievement, the MCC has granted \$1,000 to each of their three representatives.

David Tilley

David was one of over 50 VicRoads personnel who worked in Fiji during the late 1980s to the early 2000s. He visited Fiji recently and this is what he wrote:

'I was in Fiji last week and wanted to let you know how it has changed. Suva is about four or five times bigger than it was in our days. I think Frank Bainimarama (Prime Minister) has done a pretty good job. Even the Indian population are happy enough with him for doing away with the Council of Chiefs.'



Suva today.

Peter Newitt

Peter recently retired from Gippsland Region where he was Team Leader Regional Projects for the Department of Transport. For many years now he has been sending me old copies of Traralgon Division newsletters which he circulated regularly. I dipped into them and occasionally used some of the material for the newsletter.

This is the last note he sent to me.

'Well as I noted when forwarding the previous Blast from the Past I have come to the end of my collection of these records and memories from the past. All 53 editions which I have collected and let sit in my desk for over 20 years have now been scanned and stored in the current electronic filing system for posterity. My work here is done, and it is somewhat fitting that after more than 36 years I've decided to put my hand up for early retirement which has been accepted.'



This is a photo Peter sent from 1985.

My last day as an employee at the Department of Transport will be 15 July 2022. I have mixed feeling as I fast approach this milestone date. I am extremely lucky to have worked with many great people in my time, a number of whom we have lost on the journey. I started with the RCA on the 28 January 1986 straight out of University and I like to think that I've had a number of jobs but within the one organisation. I appreciate that being a "one club player" is not the current way of the world and I suppose this demonstrates my nature.

I sincerely thank every-one and wish you all the very best for the future.'

We send our best wishes to Peter and look forward to him joining our association now that he is eligible!

Ted Barton

At the last lunch at Doncaster Shoppingtown, Ted mentioned a potential problem regarding electric vehicles and the efficacy of inductive loop detectors at traffic signals. This is what he wrote:

'My concern about this arose out of a recent incident at the intersection of High St Rd and Stephenson's Rd,

Mt Waverley. My wife was driving her car and making a right turn from Stephenson's Rd into High St Rd. She was in the right turn lane, waiting behind two other cars – waiting for the right turn arrow to come up. She waited through two or three cycles of the signals but the right turn arrow did not come and the vehicles in front of her decided to exit the lane (into the adjacent through lane) and continue their journey, and she had to do the same.

I had been through the same intersection only about 15 minutes earlier and all phases of the signals seemed to be operating normally. The weather was fine and dry and I could not see why the signals would suddenly malfunction. I rang the VicRoads (signal fault number) and spoke to one of their operators who got the location up on her screen and told me that it appeared to be operating correctly.

I then thought about why the signals might fail in this way intermittently. Loop detectors occasionally fail for various reasons, but rarely intermittently. They either work correctly or not at all. Occasionally a vehicle at the head of the queue may stop too far back from the stop line and thus fail to activate the detector, but according to my wife this did not seem to be the case on this occasion. Why then did the vehicle not activate the loop detector? In thinking about this I wondered if the lead vehicle was an electric vehicle?

News from Members continued

I know that in the early days of our traffic signal work at VicRoads my engineers in the Traffic Signals Group did quite a bit of work trying various loop configurations, dimensions, and 'tuning' arrangements during our introduction of the SCATS Traffic Control system in Melbourne. At about that time we were also changing our automatic traffic counting system from pneumatic tube detection to inductive loop detection and we needed to be sure that individual vehicles were detected either as an individual vehicle or (where required) classified into various vehicle types (e.g. multi axle trucks etc.). This led to experimentation and trials of various detector loop configurations and sensitivity tuning of the detectors. In that work I remember that the distribution of both the magnetic metal and non-magnetic (conducting) metal in the lower part of the vehicle was of critical importance especially in the tuning of the detector electrics.

I know that in Electric Vehicles (EV's) there is no large iron mass (of an internal combustion engine) in the front of the vehicle, but smaller masses of iron and copper (windings) of electric motors, located nearer the rear wheels (at least in rear wheel drive EV's) and a large area of flat plate metal (carrying the battery pack) between the front and back axles and I thought this may be a problem with the fine tuning of the electrics of the detector. I then referred to a US publication "Traffic Detector Handbook, 3rd edition FHWA-HT-06-108, which provides much information on this subject and seemed to me to indicate that the distribution of iron mass (effecting the induction of the loop detector in a positive way and the conducting metal of the floor of the vehicle effecting the coil induction in a negative way) may require re-tuning of the loop detectors to ensure reliable detection of EV's.

I contacted David Nash (now working for Traffinity) and our current Secretary of ITEANZ, who has much experience in traffic signal works and currently does some work with the signals people at Department of Transport and he contacted the appropriate manager in the DOT.

The manager responded to the effect that they do not think there is a problem in detecting EV's but I do not believe they have actually done any tests to check the operation of current loop detectors with EV's. It may well be that there is no problem, but I would like to see the actual results of properly controlled tests to see precisely what the inductive characteristics (on in-pavement detector loops) looks like compared to that of conventional internal combustion engine vehicles. In my days as Principal Traffic Engineer we would certainly do such tests or engage the University or as was then the ARRB to do so. It could be that the loops need to be closer to the stop line??

Currently, the number of EV's is still relatively low and the probability of a problem (of detection failure when an EV is the lead vehicle in the queue) is very low and thus it is not recognised as a problem at this stage. I don't know anyone who owns an EV and who might arrange to be at the head of the queue in a right turn lane, where a right turn green arrow is called only on demand. Perhaps some

of our members might own an EV, or knows someone who does, and who may be interested in carrying out a little trial. This would involve say stopping the vehicle in the normal position (with front near to the stop line, and also (say) stopping a little back from the stop line, to test the sensitivity of the detector.

I would be interested to know if anyone is in a position to do this?

Does anyone want to give it a go?

Biruta Don

Biruta wrote apropos the Latvian stories to say that she came from nearby Lithuania. Most of her mother's family remained there after the war so she has about 60 relatives still living there. Most of her father's family migrated to Canada and the USA. He was the only one to come to Australia. She has given me a few details of the story but it requires a bit more work – so I will save it for the next newsletter.

Ray Brindle

Ray was moved to write about another Latvian émigré - Anton Pommers. He said:

'Your piece about Anton Pommers took me back to my days in Location in the sixties. Anton was always an unassuming, quiet man – but no push-over. He was able to put his point of view pretty strongly. I always think of two things about Anton: He always had a glass of water on his desk, from which he partook frequently throughout the day. And he often said that he had the ambition to take over the caretaker's flat on the roof of 60 Denmark Street, because that would make his journey to work easier. Lovely fellow.'

Graeme Johnson

Graeme wrote:

'I am saddened to hear of the passing of Noel Anderson. He was in charge of the Plans & Survey drafting section when I first joined the CRB. He, along with Mac Wilkinson, were great characters on the 3rd floor ... I have very fond memories of my time there with Noel, Jack Ross, David Berry and Al Robinson to name a few. Deepest sympathy to the family.'

John Wright

John wrote:

'I worked for Noel in 1967 when I was a draftsman in Plans and Survey on the 3rd floor in Head Office. He was a very kind and sympathetic person who helped me during a difficult period in my life.'



Names wanted



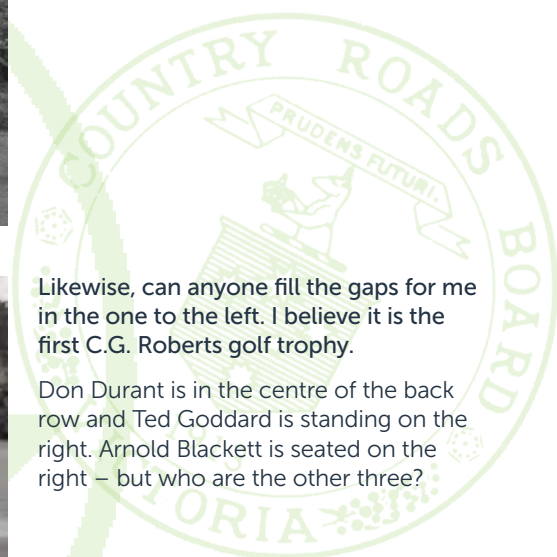
Do any members know the names of any of the people in the photograph to the left? I am also curious to know when it was taken.

Donald Darwin is fourth from the left and Rolf Jansen is on the extreme right.



Likewise, can anyone fill the gaps for me in the one to the left. I believe it is the first C.G. Roberts golf trophy.

Don Durant is in the centre of the back row and Ted Goddard is standing on the right. Arnold Blackett is seated on the right – but who are the other three?



LEST WE FORGET



Roads to War

Nick Szwed has recently posted the latest draft on the VicRoads Association website so that those of you who are connected to the internet can read it on line. I have separated it into chapters. For those of you who aren't connected you might be able to get someone to print it off – but be warned, it is a pretty large document. I have posted the full version on line but it will require heavy editing for publication. In this way, the Association will have access to the maximum amount of information.

It is nearing completion – I would say about 97%. I spent a week in the National Archives in Canberra and was able to confirm some details and solve a few puzzles. However there are still some people who require further investigation. They are Guy Baxter, Cecil Haylock, Maxwell Stuart (surveyor), Gordon Wilson, Mac Wilkinson, Allen Archibald, and Michael Doyle (who served in the Korean War). There are also some Vietnam Nashos that I haven't been able to contact. They are: Bob Adams, Ken Arthur, David Bryan, Kevin O'Keefe, David Patterson, Brian Scantlebury, Rod Smith and Doug Walsh.

There are a couple of others whose archives evade me although I do have some anecdotal information. They are: Paddy O'Donnell (there is only one document in his archive – a Prisoner of War internment card), Bob Eastick (who transferred from the Army to the RAAF – or vice versa), and Bob Handley (who was a Colonel but he does not appear to have an archive).

If you have any details about these people, no matter how trivial, please contact me.

I would really appreciate it if you read it and provide me with feedback. If you can provide any further details and especially, any photos of them, please let me know. You might also know of some omissions.

Warrant Officer Peter Noel Anderson – known as Noel 431490



Noel's paybook photograph – 1943.

Noel was born in June 1925 at Hawthorn and enlisted in the RAAF in July 1943.

As a boy, Noel had a paper round each morning accompanied by his dog, 'Trixie'. He used a billy cart but his earnings enabled him to buy a bike so that he could complete the task much more quickly. To earn more money between leaving school and enlisting in the RAAF, Noel worked part time on milk and bread delivery rounds.

Noel attended Melbourne High School. In his Attestation Form he listed two occupations – cabinet maker and school teacher. He completed one year of a teacher training course in 1942 before he enlisted. He enrolled as a cadet on 16 August 1942 - at 17 years of age – and enlisted after his 18th birthday as a Corporal. In September 1943 he was promoted to Leading Aircraftman, and then Sergeant in June 1944. After attending No. 21 Operational Training Unit in England in November 1944, he was promoted to Flight Sergeant in December 1944 and finally Warrant Officer, in December 1945.

He trained in Australia at Parkes, Ballarat and Sale in Oxford Anson, Wackett and Anson aircraft, accumulating over 60 hours of flying. In December 1943, he attended the Wireless Air Gunners School (WAGS) in Ballarat. He also completed a course at the Air Gunnery School in April 1944.

He and his fellow servicemen left Sydney, Australia on 1 July 1944 and disembarked in San Francisco, USA. They caught a train across America to New York where they boarded the Queen Elizabeth for the Atlantic crossing to England. There were 20,000 servicemen on the ship. He said once you had queued and eaten your breakfast you had to join the next queue for your lunch. They arrived in England on 12 August 1944.

His bomber crew was unusual in that it was an all-RAAF crew that flew with the RAF's Bomber Command. Consequently, they were called the 'Odd Bods'. In England, they were stationed at RAF Station Whitely Bay (Northumberland), Moreton-in-Marsh in Gloucestershire, 74 Base, Marston Moor and 71 Base at Lindholme – both in Yorkshire. Near the end of his service, Noel was posted to Gamston in Nottingham.

Aircrew were first committed to a tour of 30 operational flights, not exceeding 200 hours actual flight, which could last for anything between four months and a year. A six month break was given between tours. Operational flying was perilous. Chances of survival varied during a tour, dependent on factors such as inexperience, fatigue, type

of aircraft flown, and target. The most dangerous were the first and last five trips. During the whole war, 51% of aircrew were killed on operations, 12% were killed or wounded in non-operational accidents and 13% became prisoners of war or evaders. Only 24% survived the war unscathed.



The 'Odd Bods' – with Noel kneeling on the right.

Noel was a wireless operator/air gunner. He flew 135 operational hours as air crew flying missions over Europe in Wellington and later, Lancaster, bombers. Noel became very affectionate when talking about the Lancaster, saying it was one of the best planes ever. Due to his smaller stature, Noel was assigned the job of Rear Gunner because this entailed crawling through the fuselage of the Lancaster to the very cold and exposed rear gunner position. It must have been terrible enduring long, cold, lonely flights over the Channel and into enemy territory, not knowing if they would make it back to England without being shot down or running out of fuel.



Warrant Officer Peter Noel Anderson

Noel embarked from England on the RMMV *Athlone Castle* and arrived in Melbourne on 3 January 1946. He was just 19½ years old when he returned to Australia. He was discharged from the RAAF in February 1946. He was offered training as part of his return to civilian life and he chose to do an Arts Degree at the University of Melbourne, but he swapped to Secondary Teacher Training instead. As a student teacher he was given a posting to Kyneton High School which he was very

excited about, but it was revoked and he was sent to Campbellfield Rural School instead. He loved teaching, a skill which served him well throughout his career.

However, Noel joined the CRB in 1948 and worked in the Secretarial Section for two years before transferring to the

Title Survey Branch and then the Plans and Survey Division to become a draughtsman, where he spent the rest of his career.

After the war, Noel met Margaret Louise Ginn at church. Noel confessed to me that he didn't have a car so he needed to find a girlfriend close to where he was living. Margaret fitted that bill to a tee and they married in 1950 and have been close together ever since. Their love for one another was palpable.



Margaret and Noel on their wedding day - 1950

Margaret and Noel purchased a block of land in Chandler Grove, Burwood and commenced building their first home overlooking the back of the Burwood Tile Works and Gardiner's Creek. During this time Noel also began his career with the CRB. Materials were scarce after the war and after paying £100 for the land, they commenced building the house of their own design with the help of

Noel's father whose occupation was house builder. Every Saturday Noel cycled from Camberwell to Chandler Grove with a rucksack of tools. Margaret walked and Noel's father arrived by car after he had played golf on Saturday morning. Progress was slow but after they married they were able to move in and complete the fit out while settling into their married life together.

He retired from the CRB in 1985 after 37 years of service.

Noel died on 22 May 2022 just short of his 97th birthday.



Margaret and Noel Anderson – Anzac Day 2015.



LEST WE FORGET



Leading Aircraftman Donald Spencer-Jones 126296



Donald Spencer-Jones, 1950.

Donald was born in Ivanhoe in 1925 and enlisted in January 1943 on the day after his 18th birthday.

His file in the National Australian Archives has not been digitised so I cannot provide details of his service in the RAAF. However, from an excerpt in a Roadlines magazine in 1950 it stated that he worked as a radar mechanic for three years during the war. It also stated that he took a Science Course under the Commonwealth

Reconstruction Training Scheme after the war and he was discharged from the RAAF in March 1946.

He must have specialised in geology in his BSc because he commenced with the Board as a soil surveyor in 1950. He married Marion Neilson and they had two daughters, Meredith and Carolyn. Marion died in 1990.

I suspect his tenure at the CRB was short lived as most of his career was spent with the Geological Survey of Victoria and, in October 1967, Dr Spencer-Jones was appointed Director of that organisation.

Donald died in 2018 and at his funeral, Marion's brother, John Neilson, gave a eulogy to Donald. This is part of that eulogy.

"He had a very inquiring spirit and sought always to understand the language of the Earth. He had a quiet

sense of humour and sense of fun, which were endearing traits. He worked over a wide range of issues, including radioactive minerals, but his most lasting contribution was the detailed geological mapping and analysis of the Grampians. This, to me is his memorial. It also gained him his PhD. At about this time, he spent a week with me in the mountains north of Maffra, where I was busy on a geological mapping project. It was so good to have both his company and his advice and, camped in a cattleman's hut, we cracked many jokes at the fireside.

The next stage was Don's promotion to the role of Director of the Geological Survey, to which he made major contributions. First, he stabilised its structure, giving full recognition to its roles with groundwater and geological mapping, and its roles with minerals and the importance of geology to major engineering projects. He saw the completion of geological mapping of the state at the scale of 1-250000. He developed the staff. This led to some gaining PhD degrees, while all gained in some ways. One feature of Don's was his humility. In leadership he saw himself as a servant and that word indeed describes his whole life. He left the Geological Survey as a widely respected body. The next move was to the top administration of the Department containing the Geological Survey. This was a difficult assignment in which I am sure he acquitted himself well. He left huge footprints for others to follow."

Donald was also an Honorary Director of the National Museum and a Councillor of the Royal Humane Society.



ROAD CONSTRU

And now for something beautiful

I love planet Earth. It never fails me in all its diversity, mystery and beauty and I keep asking myself impossible questions about its formation and history. Why is it here? Why does it change? What is its fate?

The Roman philosopher and thinker, Lucretius, wrote a poem over 2,000 years ago – *De rerum natura* – which translates to *On the Nature of Things*. I am reading a book about it at the moment called *The Swerve* by the Professor of Humanities at Harvard University, Stephen Greenblatt. I am finding it a fascinating read. Lucretius' poem was lost for about a thousand years but it emerged again just before the Renaissance – an intriguing story in itself.

Apart from Lucretius's poem almost nothing is known about him. The little evidence available is quite inconclusive. Jerome, a leading Latin Church Father, in his chronicle for the year 94 BCE, stated that Lucretius was born in that year and that years afterward a love potion drove him insane. Having written some books in lucid intervals, he killed himself in his 44th year.

Lucretius' prose would still be considered by many as provocative. He lived in a time when everyone thought that the Sun orbited the Earth - and so did he. But the real basis of his philosophy was that the universe comprised an infinite number of atoms moving through space linking

up and forming a variety of complex structures which broke up to form others in a ceaseless process of creation and destruction. He predated Darwin by two millennia by postulating that living organisms (i.e. plants and animals) involve a principle of natural selection but nothing lasts forever whether it be our species, the Earth itself and even the Sun. It will die off – but the atoms will last forever. They are immortal.

Wow!

But what has this got to do with something beautiful? Well, in this newsletter I propose to write about beautiful landscapes all of which have been formed in different ways but made up with the same atoms. Perhaps Lucretius is right!

We all have our favourite landscapes and seascapes which we never tire of enjoying. They arouse emotions, calm our souls and mutate daily and seasonally. For years, I took international visitors down to the coast along the Southern Ocean to see the Twelve Apostles. Each time, I saw them through different eyes and I never ceased to be humbled by them.

But for this newsletter, I want to include new landscapes that few of us have seen. I hope you enjoy them.

The Pitons – St Lucia

These lush twin peaks rise up from the Caribbean Sea at Soufriere in St Lucia. They have been listed on the UNESCO World Heritage register. The Pitons feature openings in the Earth's surface which emit steam and volcanic gases, hot springs, and rock carvings by an ancient civilisation. At about 800 metres, Gros Piton is taller than Petit Piton.



And now for something beautiful continued



Drakensberg

Iguassu Falls, Argentina/Brazil

These falls are wider than Victoria Falls and taller than Niagara. They are set in the tropical jungles near the three-way border between Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay.

Iguassu consists of 275 separate falls. The most impressive one is a U-shaped cataract nicknamed "The Devil's Throat" which has 14 falls plunging more than 106 metres.

Drakensberg, South Africa

This is one of the landscapes I have visited. I was working in Kwazulu-Natal and our host invited us one weekend to go to Lesotho which is a land-locked country containing the highest mountains in Southern Africa. I recall that I forgot to take my passport so my South African hosts hid me under a blanket in the back seat of the car – which happened to be a Land Rover owned by the Kwazulu-Natal Police Force. I got through without mishap and in Lesotho we stopped at a hotel 100 metres from the border and had a beer overlooking the escarpment. It was the highest hotel in all of Africa.

I recall the ominous sight of the Drakensberg. The Great Escarpment reaches its greatest elevation – 2,000 to 3,482 metres within the border region of South Africa and Lesotho. Its total length is 1,000 kilometres. The area is rich in flora and fauna and the San cave paintings are evidence of a civilisation that existed in the range 40,000 years ago.

Sossusvlei, Namibia

Sossusvlei is a salt and clay pan surrounded by high red dunes, located in the southern part of the Namib Desert, in the Namib-Naukluft National Park of Namibia. The name "Sossusvlei" is often used in an extended meaning to refer to the surrounding area, which is one of the major visitor attractions of Namibia.

Takstang Palphug Monastery, Bhutan

Majestically woven into the mountainside near Paro, Bhutan, sits Taktsang Palphug Monastery. Equally dramatic as it is stunning, this Buddhist temple complex – commonly known as the Tiger's Nest – is Bhutan's most prominent landmark.

Reaching the monastery requires a 4-5 hour round trip hike, but the views are well-worth the early wake-up call and 1,700 foot elevation gain. The entire path is carpeted with colourful prayer flags, vibrant prayer wheels, and unobstructed views of the monastery.



Iguassu Falls



The Namib Desert, Namibia



The Namib Desert, Namibia



Tiger's Nest, Bhutan

BOARD

Trivia and didactic whimsies

Biblical Studies

I am not sure of the veracity of this but I thought it was worth including.

Children in America were asked questions about the Old and New Testaments. The following 25 statements about the bible were written by children. They have not been retouched or corrected. Incorrect spelling has been left in.

1. In the first book of the bible, Guinness. god got tired of creating the world so he took the sabbath off.
2. Adam and eve were created from an apple tree. Noah's wife was Joan of ark. Noah built an ark and the animals came on in pears.
3. Lots wife was a pillar of salt during the day, but a ball of fire during the night.
4. The jews were a proud people and throughout history they had trouble with unsympathetic genitals.
5. Sampson was a strongman who let himself be led astray by a Jezebel like Delilah.
6. Samson slayed the philistines with the axe of the apostles.
7. Moses led the jews to the red sea where they made unleavened bread, which is bread without any ingredients.
8. The egyptians were all drowned in the dessert. Afterwards, Moses went up to mount cyanide to get the ten commandments.
9. The first commandment was when Eve told Adam to eat the apple.
10. The seventh commandment is thou shalt not admit adultery.
11. Moses died before he ever reached canada then Joshua led the hebrews in the battle of geritol.
12. The greatest miricle in the bible is when Joshua told his son to stand still and he obeyed him.
13. David was a hebrew king who was skilled at playing the liar. He fought the Finkelsteins, a race of people who lived in biblical times.
14. Solomon, one of Davids sons, had 300 wives and 700 porcupines.
15. When Mary heard she was the mother of Jesus, she sang the magna carta.
16. When the three wise guys from the east side arrived they found Jesus in the manager.
17. Jesus was born because Mary had an immaculate contraption.
18. St. John the blacksmith dumped water on his head.
19. Jesus enunciated the golden rule, which says to do unto others before they do one to you. He also explained a man doth not live by sweat alone.
20. It was a miricle when Jesus rose from the dead and managed to get the tombstone off the entrance.
21. The people who followed the lord were called the 12 decibels.
22. The epistels were the wives of the apostles.
23. One of the oppossums was St. Matthew who was also a taximan.
24. St. Paul cavorted to christianity, he preached holy acrimony, which is another name for marraige.
25. Christians have only one spouse. This is called monotony.

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