

VicRoads Association

Newsletter No. 238



San Michel in Foro, Italy

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 usually have at least two newsletters on the go at any one time. Sometimes it is three. This is usually brought about by space. To produce a 16-page newsletter I write about 22 pages of text in a 10 point font including diagrams and photographs. Rachel, the designer at the Department of Transport, then has the task of fitting the text and photographs into the space of 16 pages. When I send my draft off to the Design Studio, I often say that if there is too much, cut a few of the jokes out at the back. This happens sometimes but not too often.

Last month's newsletter was only 12 pages. I had written the usual number of pages but there were more photographs than usual and this presented Rachel with a logistical problem that only she could solve when filling up the space. The designers like to have a few spaces in the text – otherwise it starts to look turgid. Anything that I or Rachel cut out is usually pasted into the next newsletter – hence the multiple running drafts.

I always like to have a photograph on the front page. This is purely for aesthetics. Indeed, for this newsletter I am creating a problem for myself because the text of this introduction requires no illustration. I will have to plonk a totally irrelevant photo in here just to make the format more interesting. I have another similar problem later on when I discuss the Department of Transport. The discussion will probably take up a number of pages without any break and it may look a little bit more boring than it really is – notwithstanding that it is a bit boring at any rate.

Not only is space a problem but time is also another enemy. If, say, you wrote to me today as I write this, and I thought it was worth informing you of its contents as early as possible, I have to go back and cut something out. The excision of course goes into next month's issue. Sometimes I have to inform the correspondent that their contribution will go into the newsletter after next – or even later. And then sometimes I forget about them which makes me feel very guilty. Please

forgive me. In this regard, I send a special note to Tom Glazebrook – I am still working on your story Tom – about the Murray River bridge at Echuca-Moama.

Another problem is content. I like to include as much news about people as I can but I also like to balance it with other stuff that has nothing to do with VicRoads or its predecessors. This includes the Didactic Whimsies and Now For Something Beautiful sections. I also feel that I should include something about roads but I am also aware that many of our readers come from non-technical backgrounds and that too much technical content is a yawn. I also feel that we are starting to transition from road transport to other modes and that these are worthy of discussion – especially for public transport and projects such as the Metropolitan Rail Tunnel and the Airport Rail Link. These have nothing to do with roads but they have everything to do with the quality of our lives in the modern world.

And, of course, I love our history. There are many wonderful stories to be told about the introduction of new technologies, the characters of the past, and every day lives of the men and



This is an irrelevant photo of Lucca in Tuscany, Italy. However, it does have some relevance when you read on.

Introduction continued

women who worked for the organisation. Roads to War falls into this category. As I wrote it I was humbled by the devotion to duty that existed then and the contributions that they made to developing the state's road network. Some of their contributions both to the war and the roads were modest but they all counted in the whole. I loved writing that and I am pleased to keep their memories alive a little longer.

Which leaves me with the jokes at the end. I know that some of them are very corny but the feedback I get is that they are well received. But, believe it or not, I labour over them. I cannot include anything blue, political or racist - and this is hard. I can't tell blonde jokes or Irish Jokes or Jewish jokes. Sometimes I structure them so that I am the butt of the joke. I contend that the joke I tell below is not racist. In fact it would lose its rationale otherwise.

A Rabbi, a Hindu, and a lawyer were travelling together in a car one night and it broke down when they were in the countryside. They walked to a nearby farm and the farmer told them that it was too late to call a tow truck.

He said he had a couple of spare beds and he could set up another one in the barn.

The Hindu said, "I'm a humble man. I'll sleep in the barn." But minutes later he returned and knocked on the door and said, "There is a cow in the barn. It's against my beliefs to sleep in the same building as a cow."

So the rabbi said, "It's okay, I'll sleep in the barn." But soon, he came back and said, "There is a pig in the barn, and I cannot shelter in a building with a pig."

So the lawyer was forced to sleep in the barn. Shortly, there was another knock on the door and the farmer sighed and answered it. It was the pig and the cow.'

Enjoy the rest of your read.

David Jellie,
Chairman and Editor

What's been happening

We had an attendance of 32 people for the dinner at Mount Waverley RSL on Monday 6 October. One of our most recent members, Biruta Don, and her husband Peter attended and we signed up a new member, Graeme Newman. It was an enjoyable night with good food and good company.

I will report on the visit to the North East Link Program in the next newsletter. It is still a week off at the time of writing.

What's coming up

Occasional Lunches at Shoppingtown Hotel 12 noon

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

Benalla/Shepparton Trip Thursday 17 – Friday 18 November 2022

So far, we have a group of 26 people coming on this trip but we can still welcome others. I have sent a notice out to all those electronically connected but briefly the plan is as follows:

Thursday 17 November: Drive to Benalla in the morning and meet for lunch at the Benalla Gallery at 12.30 pm. At 2pm we commence a tour of the LS Precast facility which will last for 90 minutes. Free time afterwards and in the evening, we will have dinner with present and ex-CRB/VicRoads staff from the region at the Northo Hotel. We will stay overnight in Benalla.

Friday 18 November: Breakfast in Benalla, then drive to Shepparton and meet at the Shepparton Art Museum at 10.30 am. At around 12 noon 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 David Jellie on 0418 105 276 or pdjellie@hotmail.com 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 endeavour 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 David 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 Golf Day date will not change irrespective of the state of the upgrade works.

Please contact Jim Webber on jimwebber@optusnet.com.au or SMS on 0412 064 527 by Friday 18 November if you wish to play and if you wish to share a cart.

Christmas Lunch at Waverley RSL Monday 12 December 2022, 12 noon

Our Christmas lunch will be held on the above date at the Waverley RSL Club which is located at the eastern end of Coleman Parade near the Glen Waverley Shopping Centre. For those wishing to travel by public transport, the RSL is opposite Glen Waverley Station which is the end of the line. There is ample off-street parking adjacent to the centre.

We are planning to start at 12 noon and we will sit down to lunch at around 12.30 pm. We have booked a separate room on the first floor with access via the lift. The cost of the lunch will be \$45 per head payable in advance. This cost covers a two course (main and dessert) with two options for each course with alternating serves. Drinks are available at the bar located in the room at bar prices. It is easier if you have photo ID for entry to the club. Your driver licence will do.

If you wish to attend, please contact Ken Vickery on 0409 561 618 or kenvickery@tpg.com.au

Payment should be made in advance via electronic transfer to the VicRoads Association account as follows:

BSB: 083323
Account number: 170934017

Please make sure when paying that you include your name as the transaction reference so that the payment can be attributed to you.

This is an excellent venue and last year's lunch was the most successful ever. It would be wonderful to catch up with you to celebrate Christmas.

News from members

Thank you to Peter Balfe, John Wright, and Brian Kemp for responding to the last newsletter. Peter knew Frank Jackson personally. He told me that Frank was Bill Dolamore's batman in Changi Prison and Frank told Peter that he used to hone Bill's razor on a rock. John confirmed Long Jack Ryan's service in the RAAF. He was certain that he served in Townsville and that he was badly injured in a flying crash. Brian thought that the golfer seated next to the buggy (in Newsletter 236) was Andrew McLellan.

Noel Osborne -and a few others - pointed out that Peter Newitt's photograph (also in 236) incorrectly named Dave Nicholson - not Rod. Noel also thought the photograph may have been taken at an explosives course in Orbest.

Arnis Juris (George) Rumbens

I am delighted to be able to introduce the story of another Latvian who worked for the CRB – Arnis Juris Rumbens who is better known to us as George. This is his story.

"At your kind request and the urgings of my wife I hereby present my Latvian story.

My name is Arnis Juris Rumbens. In my work environment, I preferred to be known as 'George'. This also applied to the neighbours in my street and the local croquet club, but elsewhere it was 'Juris'. I was born in 1936 in Viesite – a small town in the south central part of Latvia, near the Lithuanian border. Our family lived in a three storey house and we owned a business which was a fibre spinning plant, commonly referred as a woollen mill. I was the youngest in my family that included a four year older brother, Vilnis, and two much older sisters, Juta and Vera. Our grandmother, Omi, also lived with us. Mother looked after the household while father took care of the mill employing seven operators.

Father owned a late model Ford automobile that was the envy of the town. My earliest memories are savouring the aroma of its leather upholstery. It has remained in my subconscious to this day. Also, the exhilarating experience of being driven to the Big Rock picnic area at the town lake, where I am told that I exhibited a peculiar interest in the Ice Age glacier debris nearby – such as broken rock and pebbles. Did this portend my future career in geology? Life was beautiful, and the people were happy, getting ready for the midsummer festivities. But it all changed dramatically.

On 17 June 1940, the Baltic States were invaded by Soviet Communist Russia. On that day, Latvia held its traditional song festival in Daugavpils with a mass choir of 16,000 singers. One episode has indelibly remained in my memory as a four and a half year old. It was Sunday morning and, as always, my brother and I went to the local bakery to pick up some fresh bread. Parked in front of the shop, there

stood a monstrous black tank, its engine belching out foul smelling fumes. A soldier sitting in its turret grinned at us talking loudly in a strange tongue. The gruesome sight of a dead kitten beside the tank sickened me – I ran home crying. Everything enterprise was nationalized but we were allowed to stay and run our family business for the newly formed Workers Party.

As it was, a year later on 22 June 1941, Nazi Germany invaded Soviet Russia. In Latvia, the German soldiers were welcomed with flowers as liberators but not so for the Jewish citizens. I distinctly remember our family together with neighbours seeking shelter in nearby forest from possible bomb attacks on our town, but our town was left unscathed. A German Air Force Unit used part of our house as a temporary command post. I remember the elegantly dressed Luftwaffe Officers that were kind to us – in particular, my two sisters received a lot of attention.

Soon life went back to normal. At the age of six, I attended school and one day I suffered an injury. Somehow I collided with the portable blackboard and I still carry a visible scar on top of my skull as a poignant reminder. I spent a lot of time with Boika – our large Siberian wolf dog that was my inseparable companion in everything I did. In his presence I felt safe.

We were assigned a Russian prisoner of war to use for labouring duties, as the Wehrmacht had them by the thousands. His name was Vassilij, a young man with blond hair and deep blue eyes. He had an engaging personality and we soon became friends. I learnt some of his language. He could carve out of wood beautiful figurines that fascinated me.



George at 8 years old

A year went by in fun and games for me. By 1943, the German Army was in retreat following their defeat in the Battle of Stalingrad. Today, the Battle of Stalingrad is universally regarded as the turning point in the European Theatre of war, as it forced the German High Command to withdraw considerable military forces from other areas in occupied Europe to replace German losses on the Eastern Front. The victory at Stalingrad energized the Red Army and shifted the balance of power in the favour of the Soviets.

One day soldiers came and took Vassilij away. There were tears in our eyes as he had practically become part of our family. Father who was fluent in Russian learnt that Vassilij hated communism as much as we did.

On 3 November 1944 we left Latvia and sailed on a ship from Liepaja bound for Danzig in Germany. From there we travelled by train to Nuremberg, where we survived a massive Allied bombing raid sheltering in a school cellar. The last six months of the war we spent in Roth, a beautiful town in southern Bavaria. There I was fascinated by the

young Hitlerjugend and wanted to join them, but at 8 years of age I was too young for that adventure. We spent a year living with a German family where I learnt to speak German. We were classified as Displaced Persons and spent the next four years in a camp near Nuremberg in the American Zone. In this camp the conditions were very crowded, but there was adequate food – the United Nations looked after us well. I completed Grade 4 in the camp at Latvian school.

In 1949 a wave of refugee emigration started. We could have gone to America, Australia, and South America - or stay in Germany. My family chose to come to Australia, arriving in Melbourne on a Norwegian ship, *Nellie*, on 13 September 1949. I was 13 years old. Initially we were sent to Bonegilla. My brother Vilnis and my father did the two year compulsory work: Vilnis on railways in South Australia and father at Yallourn brown coal mine. My sister Vera had arrived a year earlier and she went to Sydney. My other sister, Juta, and my grandmother chose to remain in Latvia. Mother and I were sent to camp in Cowra and then to West Sale for over two years. There I went to school, rode my bike in my spare time and practised Aussie Rules football at which I was pretty good. My father bought a house in Brunswick in 1952 and we shifted to Melbourne.



George on his bike at West Sale Holding Camp – 1951

In 1955 I matriculated from University High School in Carlton. Then, in 1961, after studying part time at RMIT, I received an Associate Diploma in Geology. During this time I worked in the Institute's

Materials Testing Department. This dealt primarily with testing of road construction materials, which was to benefit my future employment. During this time I also joined the Collingwood Athletics Club and competed at Olympic Park. My favourite discipline was the long jump but I also competed in running and throwing the javelin. I remained at the Materials Testing Department for a few more years, during which time I met and married Zigrid. Zigrid was also Latvian. She was born and lived in Riga and she was four years old when she came to Australia.



George and Zigrid on their wedding day – February 1963

My next job was with an American engineering company, Morrison Knudsen, who were engaged in the construction of the runways for the new Tullamarine Airport Project. I was placed in charge of a tin shed 'Laboratory' at the crushing plant. My job was to monitor the quality of the crushed rock product and issue reports to the Project Engineer. The laboratory employed another person as my assistant. I was officially classed as a Soils Engineer. Apart from submitting a geological report on the nearby quarry and its surrounds, my work was tedious, but rewarding, for on completion of this project I was offered another Soils Engineer position on the Mt Newman – Port Hedland Railroad project in 1969. I hit the jackpot! At last I could put my geological knowledge to good use, to discover naturally occurring materials suitable for construction of the railroad embankment. It was an exhilarating experience, with a drill rig and excavator at my disposal. I soon indicated a number of possible sites for the confirmation by the Department of Works. The country side was semi desert but it fascinated me.

Unfortunately the thousands of kilometres that separated me from my family started to take its effect. All the American families were housed in a compound and they lacked for nothing. I heard later that I would have been placed on their permanent staff with my family, if I had stayed for the full contract and the next job would have been in Saudi Arabia.

As it was, I was offered a position with CRB at Kew in Melbourne that I had enquired about earlier in the year. Of course I took it! I was classified as Scientific Officer in the Materials Research Division – Geology Section. I was thrilled to bits with my new position as it perfectly suited my career aspirations and was close to home with my



Field work for the CRB – seismic testing

family. The work was varied and fascinating. Essentially it involved qualitative assessment, of new road alignments, cut slope stability, rock rippability, bridge foundations and suitable sources of pavement material. For these purposes, geophysical testing including seismic and resistivity surveys were carried out, followed by confirmatory drilling.

The major projects that I was involved in were the Hume Freeway (Wallan to Broadford Section), the Geelong Ring Road project and sections of Western Freeway near Ballarat. I also compiled an inventory of existing and new sources of pavement materials throughout Victoria. My employment with the CRB lasted for 10 years

when I joined up with RTA in NSW for a similar type of work resulting in career advancement. I was sorry to leave the CRB particularly my colleagues Barry Fielding and John Jobson who jokingly branded me – 'The fastest report writer in the West'.

Of the Latvians in the CRB, I knew Gus Veismanis well, and Aivars Bruns. I fully concur with Juris Strante's absorbing recount of Latvians in Australia. I participated from an early age in Latvian cultural activities such as folk dancing and later, singing in both mixed and male choirs.



George at work in the RTA

The work at the RTA, Scientific Service Branch at Milson's Point was just as exciting and challenging as in Victoria. One particular project was on Snowy Mountains Highway near Yarrangobilly in south west NSW. Here the presence of sub-surface cavities created a potential hazard for road users. I carried

out a detailed electromagnetic conductivity survey to localise such phenomena. Of this investigation I presented a paper to a geomechanics conference in Adelaide. Another challenging project was the Hume Freeway Bypass at Mittagong. Here a disagreement emerged on the question of slope stability in a major road cutting. The accepted proposal of 1:1 gradient as submitted by consultants, differed to the one I had indicated in my report as 2:1, based on seismic and laboratory test data on drill samples. In due course, following heavy rain the cut failed. It was eventually repaired at a cost of one million dollars. My colleagues named this site 'Georges cut'. I was later promoted to Manager, Site Investigation Section.

Years went by. Zigrid and I now live in Geelong – and we have joined many activities. Our two sons, Paul and David have long since married, and presented us with five grandchildren. We had visited the now independent Latvia, particularly my birthplace in Viesite. The house was still there - as impressive as ever - but it is now a day surgery and apartments for overnight stays. It was so nostalgic, after all – 75 years had elapsed. Riga the capital, once the Pearl of the Baltics, was fascinating in every respect except one. There seemed to be a noticeable presence of Russians on the streets, and they were not tourists. During our third visit, one day Zigrid turned to me and said: I have had enough: "Juri, let's go home!"

Bill Sagers

Bill has provided the following report on his grandson's participation in the 2022 Baseball World Series Senior League (WSSL) Championship. The baseball WSSL is a tournament played annually in the USA for regional under 16 baseball teams. The series is a 'double jeopardy' competition – two losses and you are out, with two six-team streams – six from across the USA in one stream and six international teams in the other. The winners of each stream play off for the Championship.

In this year's event – played in early August in Easley, South Carolina – Australia was represented by the Eastern Athletics, a team of 15 youngsters selected from local teams in Melbourne's eastern suburbs summer competition. The representative teams have been successful in competition within their respective regions. Australia representation followed a successful National Championships tournament against other state's local area teams back in May.

The regions covering the international stream were:

- Europe-South Africa – teamed from Italy;
- Asia-Pacific – teamed from Guam;
- Canada – teamed from Quebec;
- Caribbean – teamed from Puerto Rico;
- Latin America – teamed from Panama;
- Australia – represented by our Eastern Athletics

From the results below, our Eastern Athletics finished fifth overall:

- Caribbean (Puerto Rico) 19 d. Australia 1
- Australia 11 d. Asia-Pacific (Guam) 1
- Australia 5 d. Canada 1
- Latin America (Panama) 6 d. Australia 1

The 2022 WSSL Champions were the Caribbean – Puerto Rico, winning 10-5 v. Virginia, USA.

Coming off a team bonding session back in May (compared to the other teams playing right up to the start of the tournament) Australia starts at a disadvantage. Rules for pitching loads to protect youngsters regulates the critical pitching rosters in tournaments such as these. A thunderstorm washout led to rescheduling of matches that required a delayed double header and limited the participation of Australia's top pitcher who did extremely well against Canada. In their elimination game against Panama, Australia was able to stay level with Panama at one run apiece until late in the game before a couple of slip-ups in the field and missed opportunities in batting proved significant.

My grandson Max played in his team's first two matches but, on falling ill, was temporally hospitalised, and was diagnosed with glandular fever, so he was unable to be considered for the final two matches. He has been OK on return, with the experience and the extended family getting together being treasured. He has followed up with a successful local winter U18 Premiership.

On a visit to a Los Angeles Dodgers training session, Max's younger brother, 13 yr old Angus, snared the session's first ball that was hit over the playing field's bordering wall.

Bill Collins

Bill wrote to tell me he enjoyed Bruch's Violin Concerto No 1 in G minor that I recommended in Newsletter 237. However, he recently came across another short but exquisite piece called *O Magnum Mysterium* by Morten Lauridsen. It is a little under seven minutes long and I have just listened to the version sung by the Kings College Choir in Cambridge (2009). I can confirm that it is hauntingly beautiful. Bill sent me an article about it written by David James, a Melbourne writer and musician and I have used this for the following notes.

Lauridsen first realised that his vocation was music when he worked alone as a Forest Service firefighter and lookout on an isolated tower near Mount St Helens in Washington State. Apparently he was shocked when he first heard his own creation at a dress rehearsal. He sat motionless in



Morten Lauridsen

his car after the session had concluded, utterly stunned by the beauty of the piece. Composers of this sort of work mostly create in the abstract so that they can only hear their music once it all coalesces. It is different for say a solo piano where the composer can play out a piece and tweak it as it progresses. Lauridsen shows that musical traditions can thrive using modern musical devices inside a traditional form.

Infrastructure news

In September, the Government announced another tranche of level crossing removals at eight locations on the Upfield Line. Since the program started, 66 crossings have been eliminated and the program is aiming to remove 85 by 2025. In addition to the removal of the 66 crossings, 37 new and upgraded stations have been built along with 50km of bike paths and around 20 MCGs of open space for local communities across Melbourne.



The Bell Street entry to the new Coburg Station.

The government claims that the program has supported more than 8,000 jobs with 72 million work hours completed.

The crossings to be removed are:

- Albert Street, Brunswick
- Albion Street, Brunswick
- Brunswick Road, Brunswick
- Dawson Street, Brunswick
- Hope Street, Brunswick
- Union Street, Brunswick
- Victoria Street, Brunswick
- Park Street, Parkville

When the project is complete, there will be no level crossings between Parkville and Coburg on the Upfield Line.

It is estimated that about 71,000 vehicles travel through these level crossings during the morning peak each weekday and the boom gates are down for up to 30 minutes.

An elevated rail bridge along the Upfield Line will complement the new rail bridge from Bell Street to Moreland Road. The project will make the Upfield Bike Path one of the most important bike paths in Melbourne, and a major transport connection from the north into the city.

As seen already by communities in Coburg and Brunswick, elevating the rail corridor will be a boon for the Upfield Bike Path, with a new dedicated bike and pedestrian path from Bell Street in the north, to Park Street in the south, providing a safer and quicker connection for locals.

From the archives

The certificate below was found in our archives. It was presented to Jack Ross in 1957 on the occasion of the removal of his appendix. It has the smell of Noel Anderson about it.



VicRoads and the Department of Transport

People still approach me to enquire about the status of VicRoads – does it still exist and what does it do? I hear reports on the radio referring to VicRoads and there are still traffic and other signs around with the VicRoads name or logo on them. The old Head Office in Kew still has VicRoads' name on it. And when you renew your rego you do it through VicRoads.

Below is my best attempt to explain it all.

The website of the Department of Transport (DOT) states the following – slightly edited:

The DOT plans and operates transport in a way that matches the people and products that travel on it, focusing on the destination, rather than which mode is used. This integrated approach ensures that the DOT can:

- respond much faster – and give people the information they need – to make the best travel choices, especially around major network disruptions
- make better use of existing road and rail, shifting more journeys onto rail and prioritising public transport on roads
- respond much quicker to innovation and new transport technologies
- take a holistic view in planning for the future, to meet demand for more than 23 million journeys a day and a tripling of freight by 2050
- partner with others to address issues from safety to reducing environmental impacts.

The DOT works closely with the Major Transport Infrastructure Authority (MTIA) to meet the transport needs of Victoria, while managing the current \$80-billion investment program in infrastructure through the Big Build.

The DOT also brings V/Line more directly into the centre of Victoria's public transport system, while improving oversight and delivery of regional public transport services. On 1 July 2021, V/Line transitioned to a statutory authority, with the CEO reporting to the Secretary of the Department of Transport.

Furthermore, because transport is also about creating places, we've partnered with Development Victoria to ensure we are best placed to keep our communities connected.

In the Organisational Structure chart of the Department of Transport there are five service cells: Policy, Precincts and Innovation; Network Design and Integration; Transport Services; Investment and Technology; and People and Business Services. There is no cell specifically relating to roads. In fact, roads only appear on the chart under the first named cell – under Road Safety Victoria. Rather, there is an emphasis on transport – such as regional transport and

metro transport – where roads would be considered as part of a broader multi-modal transport system.

So, we have to get away from the notion that there is a separate authority in the state that exclusively looks after roads. Instead, the Department of Transport looks after the management of roads along with all other state transport needs.

Effective from 1 January 2020, all road management functions and responsibilities of the Roads Corporation (VicRoads) were transferred to and vested in the Head of Transport for Victoria (established under Section 64A of the Transport Integration Act). This Act clearly states that the Roads Corporation is abolished. VicRoads was the trading name of the Roads Corporation.

Regional Roads Victoria (RRV) was established in September 2018, supposedly responding to community needs by focussing on regional issues to improve the condition of regional roads. On 1 July 2019, RRV and VicRoads came together with Public Transport Victoria (PTV) and the Department of Transport (at the time), to form a new, integrated Department of Transport (DOT). RRV manages the roads across its five regions; Eastern Victoria, North Eastern Victoria, Northern Victoria, South Western Victoria and Western Victoria.

The five regional offices, regional Public Transport and the Safer Roads program were managed by the Chief of Regional Surface Transport within the DOT. With more than 19,000 kilometres of arterial roads to manage – from the major freeways and highways linking towns and cities, to the roads that service agricultural production, freight and tourism – RRV works closely with communities, industry and other parts of Government serving regional Victoria. This includes Major Road Projects Victoria and the Major Transport Infrastructure Authority to make sure road improvements are delivered to a high standard and with minimal disruption. Victoria's roads generate 43 million regional public transport trips per annum all of which rely on the regional road network to get around.

RRV is now working with every regional and rural council and community to improve how the transport network is planned and maintained. Its aim is to improve the lives of people, wherever they live. The Victorian Register of Public Roads contains information about roads throughout Victoria, for which RRV has responsibility.

The Safer Roads Program was launched in September 2018. Since then, RRV has been engaging with communities to better understand their needs and road safety priorities. Working in partnership with the Transport Accident Commission (TAC), RRV is implementing projects that are improving safety and the road condition where the needs are highest.

The Safer Roads Program aims to reduce the risk and severity of crashes for all road users by installing safety treatments, including: flexible safety barriers, wide centrelines, overtaking lanes, intersection upgrades, new cycling corridors, and pedestrian crossings.

Major Road Projects Victoria (MRPV) is a dedicated government body charged with planning and delivering major road projects for Victoria. It is part of the MTIA which was established on 1 January 2019 as an Administrative Office in relation to the Department of Transport.

MRPV oversees the delivery of major road projects around metropolitan Melbourne as well as in regional Victoria. These projects include new roads, road widenings, new bridges and major freeway upgrades. MRPV does not operate the road network – it designs and builds it.

As stated earlier, VicRoads was a trading name for the Roads Corporation – now abolished – but it still has a high recognition in the community. People are still calling talk back radio complaining (and sometimes praising) VicRoads not realising that VicRoads is no longer in the picture. Perhaps that is a convenient thing!

To complicate matters, VicRoads still has a web page with traffic and project information and contact details. If you want to plan a trip, you still go to VicRoads' website. There is also a Facebook page and YouTube content with current updates on current construction and operational matters.

I think the only area of involvement in road transport matters involving the name VicRoads is in Registration and Licensing as evidenced by the following, recent press statement put out by the Government.

Progressing a joint venture model for VicRoads Registration, Licensing and Custom Plates.

*Following competitive and robust market engagement a consortium of **Aware Super**, **Australian Retirement Trust** and **Macquarie Asset Management** was selected to deliver the VicRoads Modernisation process, bringing benefits to individuals and businesses – including upgraded customer service systems, better Custom Plates services and user-friendly registration and licensing.*

The joint venture partners have a strong track record of successfully partnering with governments to deliver services. The partners are Australian industry superannuation funds and long-term investors with combined experience delivering the New South Wales, South Australian, Victorian and Western Australian land titles services, as well as data centres and telecommunications infrastructure.

More than 75% of the Consortium's funding is coming from Australian superannuation funds – Australian's retirement savings are being investing back into essential services provided by VicRoads which Victorians rely on every day.

The partnership is the result of a 15-month process that included consultation with VicRoads workers, unions, motorists groups and other stakeholders.

The joint venture is a 40-year partnership in which the Government retains ownership of VicRoads, while generating \$7.9 billion in upfront proceeds for the State, which will be invested in the new Victorian Future Fund to help manage our pandemic debt.

The Government has also delivered on its commitment to protect the jobs of existing VicRoads employees, while creating more than 120 new jobs to oversee the partnership, support the IT modernisation process and bolster the Government's road safety role.

Continued ownership of VicRoads by the Government will ensure control over regulation and policy, data and privacy provisions and pricing of essential fees, with information to remain secure and stored in Australia.

Independent integrity bodies, including the Victorian Ombudsman and the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner, will continue to provide oversight.

VicRoads will continue to operate state-wide under the established VicRoads brand and there will be no impact to Victorians accessing these vital services.

The Government will also immediately deliver benefits for Victorian drivers through a package that will slash licensing and online testing costs and reward safe driver behaviour.

Under the changes, learners and probationary licences as well as online testing will be made free. Under these changes, aspiring drivers and riders will save up to \$51.40 in learner licensing and online testing fees. While probationary drivers will save up to \$133.30 in probationary license and online hazard perception testing fees.

Safe drivers who have not incurred demerit points or committed road safety offences in the three years prior to their licence expiring, will be rewarded with the reintroduction of a 25 per cent discount on their licence renewal.

The VicRoads Registration and Licensing business maintains registers of more than 6 million vehicle operators and 5 million driver licence holders, including cars, motorcycles, heavy vehicles and boats.

In a nutshell, the emphasis in Victoria's transport planning has shifted away from mainly private road-based transport to rail and public-based road transport (such as buses and trams). However, VicRoads lives on – not as a State Road Authority but as a Registration and Licensing entity.

I hope this is not too boring – I feel quite exhausted after writing it and I'm not 100 per cent certain about what I have written. I invite any comments from wiser minds.

LEST WE FORGET



Flight Sergeant Stanleigh Richard (Rick) Clarke 11323

Stanleigh (always known as Rick) enlisted in the RAAF in July 1940 and served until July 1947. He was born in Melbourne in May 1922 – so that his age at enlistment was just 18. At the time of his enlistment his occupation was as clerk with Gregory Steel Products in Collingwood.

There is confusion about his name. On some forms it is 'Richmond' rather than 'Richard' but on others, 'Richard' has been crossed out. But on two statutory declarations that he completed on the file and elsewhere in his archive, he referred to himself as Stanleigh Richard Clarke. I also notice on the file that there are different spellings of his first name – 'Stanleigh' and 'Stanley' – both of which he has put his signature to at various times.

Flight Sergeant Clarke's training as a pilot started at Laverton (Victoria) in July 1940 and he attended an Air Crew Course at Air Force headquarters in October 1940. Further training occurred, flying Tiger Moths (50 hours of elementary training) and Avro Ansons (130 hours of service training). This training was undertaken in Sandgate (Brisbane), Benalla (north central Victoria), Ascot Vale (Melbourne) and Bradfield Park (Sydney).

He embarked from Sydney for the United Kingdom on 16 May 1942. He didn't arrive in England until 14 August – a journey of three months. There are no details that I can see about how he got there but I suspect that it was via Canada. In England, he gained further flying experience flying Airspeed Oxfords at Hankerton, Wiltshire, and Wellingtons at Moreton on Marsh, Gloucestershire. The Airspeed Oxford was a twin-engine monoplane aircraft developed and manufactured by Airspeed. It saw widespread use for training British Commonwealth aircrews in navigation, radio-operating, bombing and gunnery roles throughout the Second World War.

In February 1943 he embarked for the RAF Middle East Command in Egypt. He was attached to Ferry Command. This was the secretive RAF command formed to ferry urgently needed aircraft from their place of manufacture in the United States and Canada, to the front line operational units in Britain, Europe, North Africa and the Middle East.

In June 1943, he was discharged on being granted a commission, and sent to Air Head Quarters in Calcutta, India, to join 215 Squadron. He was now a Flight Lieutenant. Following the outbreak of war with Japan, 215 Squadron (RAF) was re-formed as a bomber unit in December 1941. Equipped with Wellingtons, it was posted to India in 1942 and was involved in bombing operations in the Burma Campaign. It was later re-equipped with Liberator aircraft. During this period, it included a significant proportion of

aircrews from other Commonwealth countries, many of whom, like Rick, were RAAF personnel. The squadron suffered significant losses of personnel and aircraft on operations over Burma. In April 1945 it assumed a transport role and was re-equipped with Douglas Dakota aircraft.



Rick's enlistment photo (left) and another taken later during his service.

In India, he flew, as a pilot, on 25 sorties comprising 21 night bombing raids (in Wellingtons), two supply drops (in Dakotas) and two day bombing raids (in Liberators). This service was between 23 March 1943 and 25 November 1944. Altogether he logged 174.30 hours on operations. In RAF squadrons aircrew were committed to a tour of 25 to 30 operational flights not exceeding 200 actual hours, over a period of four to twelve months. A six-month break – usually spent as instructors – was followed by a second and final tour.

Instructing had its dangers too, as it involved flying with inexperienced pilots, usually in old or superseded planes. In the RAF, more than 8,000 men were killed in training or non-operational flying during the war. Throughout the stories in this book, it is clear that operational flying was extremely hazardous for a variety of reasons in addition to enemy firepower from the ground and in the air. Other factors included the target location, fatigue, the type of aircraft flown, and maintenance and airworthiness of the plane. Statistically, the most dangerous sorties were the first five and the last five.

Bomber operations were extremely stressful with random chances of death or terrible injury. It was physically and mentally demanding and required intense concentration for many hours, even on the return journeys from their targets. Not only did they have the danger of hostile enemy firepower, but adverse weather conditions could also cause damage and destroy planes. There were other hazards too such as frostbite, lack of oxygen and lower air pressure at height and the crews needed equipment to keep them warm and breathing. These dangers were exacerbated when flying at night.

Not all aircrew made it home to their base. Some planes were forced down in the sea. If men were able to escape, they could not survive in the water too long. If survivors were spotted, or if their distress signals were heard, rescue by ships or seaplanes could be made.



LEST WE FORGET



Strategic bombing on Burma was never on the scale that it was over Europe. However, the Wellingtons and later Liberators in the theatre did achieve some remarkable feats with their limited numbers. Their willingness to continue flying through the monsoon season was an impressive feat. Japanese aviators pulled out of the theatre during this time as they considered it was too difficult to fly. Although flying under these conditions was an added danger, it was felt by the RAF that the benefits justified the decision. The targeting of Japanese airfields meant that the Japanese Air Force pulled its planes further back and indirectly led to Allied bases being made fairly safe from Japanese air attack.

From Rick's archive, it can be concluded that he finished his first tour of duty flying with the RAF in 215 Squadron and the 31st West African Division over Burma, and was sent back to Australia where he disembarked at Melbourne on 17 January 1945. As was the practice, he was sent to the Advanced Flying and Refresher Unit based in Deniliquin, NSW. This was more commonly known as No. 7 Service Flying Training School RAAF (SFTS). To illustrate the point made earlier, No. 7 SFTS suffered a number of accidents during its existence, resulting from pilot error, mechanical faults, fuel exhaustion, and collisions on the ground and in the air. At least 29 instructors and students were killed during training.

It was here that Rick's war ended and he was discharged in July 1947.

Following discharge from the RAAF, he served under articles to Mr M. J. Lea CE and obtained his license on 16 October 1950. He joined the CRB in July 1951. For several years he carried out all types of surveys throughout the state and the metropolitan area, and he was appointed Senior Staff Surveyor in December 1962. However, as the CRB expanded it wasn't long before the Title Survey Section had to relocate to 'Saint Martins in the Field', a smallish former church hall around the corner in Queensberry Street.

Rick became the third leader of the Title Survey Section following the death of Sid Atkinson and later, the retirement

of Theo Lester Atkinson. He was an extremely competent and visionary manager and ensured that the section adopted the best modern technology and new computer systems and that all surveys were fully integrated within the CRB and the State. Part of his vision was to combine the various survey and mapping functions that were operating separately throughout the CRB. After a significant amount of work he brought all groups together to form the Survey and Mapping Division. This new Division included title surveying, engineering surveying, geodetic surveying, cartography, photogrammetry, survey development photography and all the survey and mapping records.



Rick Clarke on his appointment as Principal Title Survey Officer

Rick was a leader in the survey profession throughout the State. He was an active member of the Institution of Surveyors Australia and was President of the Victorian Division of the Institution during 1971 and 1972. He was appointed as a Member of the Surveyors' Board of Australia for a two-year period from 1975 to 1977 where he and other Members were responsible for the Registration of Surveyors and maintaining and developing the application of cadastral surveying and standards throughout Victoria.

After his retirement from VicRoads, he moved to Barwon Heads with his wife and enjoyed a long and healthy retirement. It is interesting to note that one of his sons, Drew Clarke, was also a surveyor who worked for many years in several Commonwealth Government Departments. Drew had a somewhat stellar career and he became Chief of Staff to Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull.

Rick died near Geelong on 31 July 2016 at the age of 94.





And now for something beautiful

I am going to be extremely lazy over the next few newsletters because I am going to serialise a story I wrote in 2001 about the beautiful city of Lucca in Tuscany in northern Italy. I called the story – Lonely in Lucca. I hope you enjoy it.

In 2001, I had an operation for a detached retina in my right eye at the Community Hospital of Lucca in northern Tuscany. I spent ten days recuperating in hospital and then spent one night at the home of Australian friends who were returning home the following day. They had arranged for me to stay at a small hotel just a stone's throw from the hospital. This was very convenient as I had to visit the hospital daily to have my eye examined.



Map of Tuscany showing its administrative divisions including Lucca

I was staying in the Villa Romantica – a cosy hotel just outside the wall encircling Lucca. The wall itself is one of the most striking features of Lucca, totally enclosing the old city and accentuating its intimacy and charm. Walled cities in Italy are not rare, but few have walls that are as intact as the one surrounding Lucca. Its construction was completed in the late 1700s with the later addition of some of its gates. But the wall we now see is, in fact, the fourth wall built around the city. The first was built in Roman times, the second from the 12th to 13th century and the third in the 16th century. Vestiges of these earlier walls remain but it is the grandeur of the last bastion that impresses. It is 4.2 kilometres long, 30 metres wide at its base, and because of its length and massive earthworks, it took more than a century to construct.



Aerial view of the walled city of Lucca

Happily the wall has never been put to the test in defending the citizens of Lucca but in 1812 it did save the town. In that year, the nearby River Serchio flooded the surrounding area but the gates were closed and sealed to save the city. Elisa Baciocchi, Napoleon Bonaparte's sister and Governor of Lucca at the time, was outside the walls when this occurred and she had to be unceremoniously hoisted over the wall by Derrick.

The gate I entered each day had two dates inscribed above it – MDXCII and MDCCCLXXIX. Work it out for yourself. The wall accommodates a road, footpaths, avenues of trees, gardens and restaurants whose tables and chairs are usually occupied by card players. It is essentially a public park providing an exceptional viewing platform for the medieval city it protects, a far better use than the car racing once conducted there. One day – a public holiday – I walked the full perimeter. I estimate there were about 5,000 Lucchesi with me. Couples strolled arm in arm dressed in their Sunday best. Joggers jogged in designer tracksuits and cyclists cycled, emblazoned in lycra tights and streamlined helmets as if they had just arrived from the Tour de France, languidly drifting along with wheels whirring and clicking. Helmeted kids were out on their trainer bikes, priests pontificated, lovers loved and dogs did what dogs do. There was not one cruddy old tee shirt stating that "My dad bought this in Hong Kong", nor one Dunlop Volley sandshoe. I felt positively unkenpt.



Walking on the wall of Lucca

Each day I made an expedition into town. I first of all headed for Piazza del Giglio where I could buy yesterday's Guardian and have my first coffee in the bar adjacent to the theatre. After a few days they saw me coming, and the coffee was awaiting my arrival. People drifted in and out, sank an aperitif or a coffee and read the paper. By sitting inside rather than at a table in the piazza, I saved a couple of dollars. I caught up on yesterday's news and planned my excursion for the day. Let me describe just a few of these excursions.

The Piazza San Michele is on the site of the old Roman forum right in the heart of the city. It is a natural meeting place surrounded by some fine Renaissance buildings and stately loggias of elegant proportions. But it is the Church of San Michele in Foro that dominates the square. It is typical of the Romanesque style that developed in Lucca. It has a square bell tower which I swear leans a little bit to the left, but nowhere near as dramatically as its Pisan neighbour only twenty minute's drive away. Graceful external arches in two levels adorn the exterior of the building giving it its wedding cake appearance. I suspect that the white marble and limestone exterior hides a rather ordinary fabric of brick. A shallow depth of brick wall is exposed atop the highest level of arches for the full length of the building but so glittering is the external decoration that most eyes would miss it.

The masterpiece of this building is the main façade of the west door. It rises high above the building, an artifice that makes you feel that you are entering a cathedral rather than a largish church. All the external decoration of the building is concentrated on the façade. The lintel across the main door contains a very cheeky looking merman with two tails, a centaur and other exotic, zoomorphic forms. It is festooned with arches supported by columns all of which are different. They are pink, green and white, twisted, spiralling, carved and smooth. There is no human figure on the façade. No saints, apostles, disciples, popes, kings, patrons or Renaissance businessmen but there are faces on the capital of each column staring out into posterity. I found out later that the façade was significantly restored during the nineteenth century and that many of these faces were portraits of famous men of the time such as Garibaldi and Vittorio Emanuele.

In the afternoon sun it is a blaze of colour and all the mosaic inlaid monsters and animals shimmer in the light and bare their teeth. The artists who created this masterpiece had great wit and I bet they looked forward each day to see who could create the most exotic beast. On the pinnacle of the tympanium is a statue of St Michael Archangel with huge, staring eyes, his wings outstretched, holding an orb in his left hand. The spear in his right hand is about to pierce the gullet of a rather uncomfortable looking dragon. I kept coming back each day to admire the colour and imagination of this creation. It is witty without the sombre pessimism of many Christian edifices. Although it is

symmetrical in its structure, the randomness of its parts and colours have created an exciting sight – even if only one of your eyes is working properly. Would you forgive me if I said that it was a sight for sore eyes?

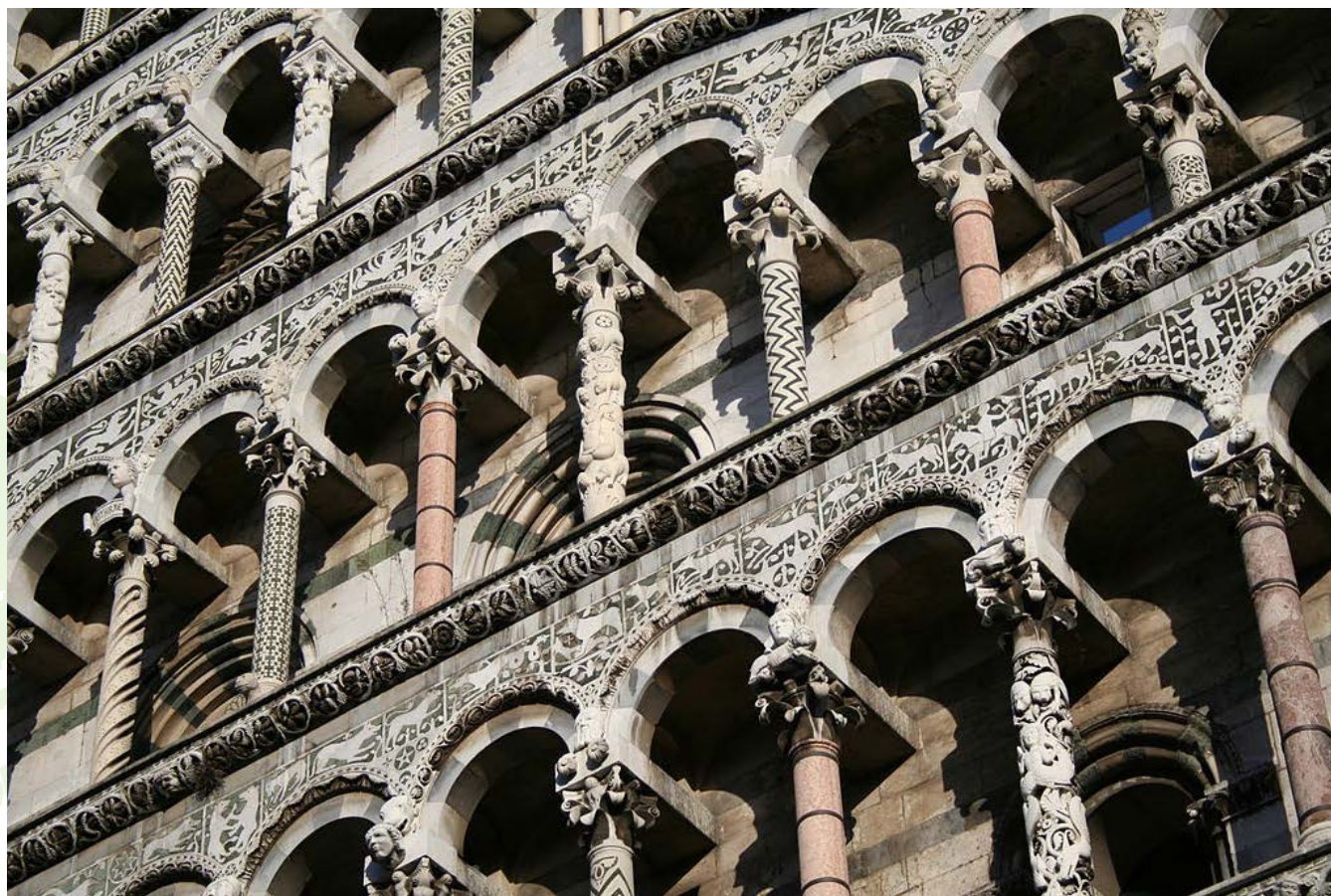
San Michel in Foro



The west façade



In next month's newsletter I will introduce you to Saint Zita who died in 1278 but who regularly parades the streets of Lucca every April to bless the daffodils. I am not kidding!



Detail of the west façade



Trivia and didactic whimsies

For English Language Lovers

What is the difference between 'complete' and 'finished'? No dictionary has been able to explain the difference. However, at a linguistic conference recently held in England, an American delegate was the clever winner of the conundrum.

He said that when you marry the right woman you are 'complete'. If you marry the wrong woman you are 'finished'. And when the right woman catches you with the wrong woman, you are 'completely finished'.

COVID Woes

Sadly we've lost some of our local businesses recently.

The bra shop has gone bust, the watch-mender has called time, the paper shop folded, the shoe repairer has been soled, the food blender factory has gone into liquidation, and the TV aerial shop called in the receivers...

Eternal life

A man was idly walking along the beach when he came across a lamp partially buried in the sand.

He picked it up and, on impulse, gave it a rub and sure enough a genie appeared and told him he had been granted one wish. He thought for a moment and said, "I want to live forever."

"Sorry," said the genie, "I'm not allowed to grant eternal life."

"Okay then, I want to die after our government balances the budget, eliminates debt and stamps out corruption."

"You sneaky blighter..." said the genie!

From Graham Gilpin

Someone said "Nothing rhymes with orange."

I said "No it doesn't."

An Ideal Husband

Jock had passed away and as usual the minister was reciting his history and attributes at his funeral.

"Jock was a great family man, always helping with the dish-washing and housework, a model husband and father, never out late and has not allowed a drop of whisky to pass his lips."

His widow, squirming in her seat, could stand it no more. She bent down and whispered to her son, "Jimmy, go on up and look in the coffin, I think we might be at the wrong funeral."

Army Discipline

One day in the army I was assigned Kitchen Parade duty.

I reported to the Mess and was told by the sergeant in charge that he wanted me to make 200 litres of soup for tonight's dinner. I told him I didn't know how to make soup. He handed me a book and told me to follow the directions carefully.

A couple hours later I had a large kettle of soup simmering. The sergeant came up and tasted the soup. He took a second spoonful and stood there staring at me. I thought I had really messed up the soup and was waiting for a reprimand.

Instead he said, "This tastes good... are you sure you followed the recipe?"

David Jellie

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