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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, by phone or e-mail as shown above. Visit our website at <https://vicroadsassociation.org>



Dear Members

Merry Christmas everyone! My Christmas wish is that as seasoned, senior persons we can all enjoy Christmas as much as I did when I was a toddler.

In December 1946 I was six years old, living in Bendigo and helping my sister, five years older than me, make Christmas decorations for the kitchen and lounge. Mum had bought red and green crepe paper from the newsagent, which we were cutting into two-inch wide strips and twisting into decorative chains that spanned the ceilings of the kitchen and loungeroom.

World War 2 had ended only the year before and, with the post-war consumer boom yet to begin, the only other decorations we had were fold-out paper bells. There were no baubles, stars, tinsel and definitely no Christmas tree.

Santa was coming because I'd been a good boy (well, sort of) and he was going to magically appear in the wee small hours to leave my presents in a pillowcase bearing my name. At school I'd heard about Mary and Joseph, their new baby, Bethlehem's accommodation crisis and the new star in the eastern sky. It was all part of the magic of that first Christmas Eve, although I did wonder how and where Santa fitted in to the picture. I went to bed early, full of anticipation. My mother, sister and brother stayed up late and attended midnight mass, while Dad, who wasn't a believer, held the fort.

My presents weren't wrapped – probably because my mother still remembered the Depression that had ended barely seven years earlier, and the recent wartime rationing. She wasn't about to waste good brown paper on kids' presents. While I was delighted with my wind-up train set

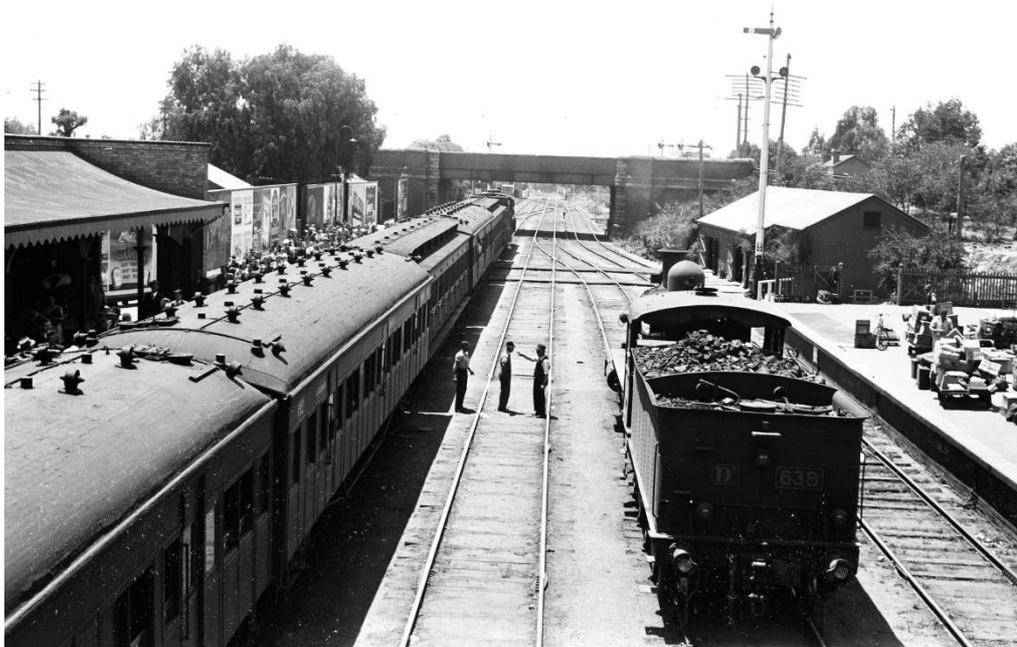
and other small goodies, the thing I enjoyed most was being with my family around the kitchen table, where we laughed, sang and tucked into a scrumptious roast chook dinner¹.

Roast chook was then pretty much a once-a-year treat for many families - followed by plum pudding with sixpences in it - and brandy sauce. In consideration of my tender age, I'd been spared the horror of our rooster's summary execution, and I hadn't noticed that the proud bird was no longer strutting around with the hens in the backyard or making unwanted announcements of dawn's arrival.

The adults, including my 21-year-old brother, toasted each other with Abbots Lager, which then only came in dark, long-necked bottles. My sister and I responded with raspberry cordial. Apart from the plum pudding, there were no Christmas dinner leftovers needing to be kept cool. Back then, mass-produced home refrigeration was still at least five years away and our Coolgardie safe² did a reasonable job of keeping the butter and milk from spoiling. We weren't to experience the luxury of an ice chest until the following year.

Already a train enthusiast at six, my true joy was arriving at Bendigo Station to board the afternoon train to Melbourne for our Christmas family holiday. Dad took me up front to see the locomotive, shrouded in escaping steam, radiating heat from its massive bulk and panting like a living thing - impatient to get going. I was entranced by its dark majesty and intoxicated by the wonderful smell of hot, greased steel, coal smoke and steam.

The journey to Melbourne was also exciting, particularly going through the tunnels at Big Hill and south of Castlemaine, when there would suddenly be a huge din, and smoke and cinders would come blasting in through the open windows. Along the tracks were deep blue, enamelled signs with white lettering advertising *Dr Morse's Indian Root Pills*, and other signs reminding travellers that *Griffith Brothers Teas* could now be obtained in an ever-decreasing number of miles (in Melbourne). For me, it was truly a joyful time.



¹ None of our Christmas dinner birds were chickens. They were all big, grown-up birds. I think 'chicken' was an Americanism that crept into our speech much later. Also, I'm not sure when the convention changed, but in the 1940's, dinner happened in the middle of the day. The evening meal was called 'tea'.

² A perforated metal, low-tech food storage unit, using evaporative cooling. See [Coolgardie safe - Wikipedia](#)

MEMBER COMMENT AND NEWS

From John Scully

John,

Thanks for another highly interesting and very enjoyable newsletter. Your history of Victoria's roads organisations, *'The advent of the Road Construction Authority'* was very good.

I joined VicRoads in December 1995 and heard only isolated mentions of its predecessor organisations. And I heard only scattered comments and references about Ian Stoney but did not understand what he did. Your article has explained it all.

So thanks for making sense of it for me. When you wrote 'neither completely autonomous, nor fully accountable' about the seven authorities that were merged, it made perfect sense to me. I never quite understood how these disparate organisations worked as road system developers and managers until I read your words.

Your writing is fluent, logical and informative!

Best wishes. John Scully

From Clive Mottram

Hi John

Thank you for your recent VicRoads Association newsletter. I realise that you have written the history in the last newsletter based around the Road Construction Authority, but you are also seeking information from other viewpoints. In my case, I was at the RTA from 1982 or 1983 until 1989.

I think it is also pertinent to note that Ian Stoney was also appointed as Chairman and Managing Director of the Road Traffic Authority, I think sometime in 1988, so that when RCA and RTA merged in July 1989, and he was first CEO of VicRoads, he was already in charge of both agencies.

While I am apparently contradicting David Jellie's writings (p. 7), I can definitively state that the major outsourcing of the Plant Branch, including its sale to AH Plant occurred during the Kennett Government era after 1992, when it was VicRoads, not prior to July 1989. I recall that Tom Flintoff was appointed as Manager of the Plant Branch and he then led a staff buyout of the Plant Branch, in conjunction with other staff, and with outside financial backing. Other outsourcing such as Internal Audit, Legal and much IT also occurred during the Kennett Government era.

On another point, it was my belief that East Gippsland, South Western and Wimmera-Mallee offices were downgraded from Regional Offices in their own right to sub-offices of the relevant main regions, rather than being closed altogether (p.8). I recall Linda Oman, for example, being based in Horsham until relatively recently, as my reason for thinking these offices did remain open, but in a reduced role.

Happy to discuss.

Kind regards, Clive

[Editor's note. Thanks for the worthwhile corrections, Clive.]

Vale Eileen Walsh



Eileen, who was very well known to the staff of Materials Division as a much-loved canteen attendant over a long period of time, passed away on 13 November, aged 97.

Thanks to Kelvin York and Joan Gilmer for letting us know.

Lance Midgley is planning to provide more detail about Eileen in his forthcoming *History on Materials Research Vision*, which is currently nearing completion.

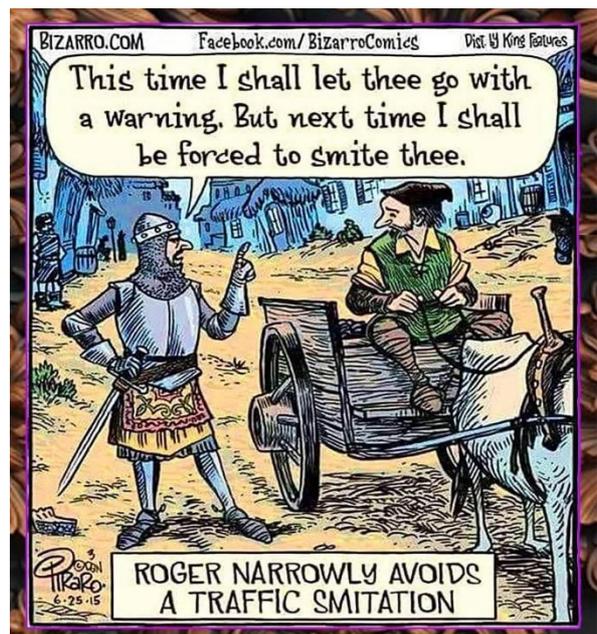
Vale Peter Ager



Peter Ager passed away on 30 October 2025, aged 81. He worked for VicRoads in Contract Services, and for many years before, as a consultant for major road contractors. He was well-known to construction engineers – particularly those working on the Western Ring Road and the Calder and Geelong Freeways.

Eve Grimm, John Baldock, Rick Bush and Dimi Polymenakos, who all worked with Peter, remembered him as a helpful person, full of integrity and great to work with. Peter was respectful and was especially noted for being impartial in seeking to achieve a fair outcome in construction contract issues.

A Memorial Service to celebrate Peter's life is to be held at the South Beach Project in Mount Martha on 9 January 2026 at 3.00 pm. His daughter Kate Garside has asked that friends who wish to share memories and celebrate Peter's life respond to her on 0425 735 240, or to Lucy Danaher on 0405 504 645 or by email Garside.kate.j@gmail.com by 23 December 2025 to facilitate catering arrangements.



Skin Cancer. A personal account – by Tony Boyd

[Editor's note: Many of our Members, family and friends have experienced skin cancer in one or more of its many forms. Australians are very fortunate that it is relatively easy to get a comprehensive skin cancer check, so it's not only highly recommended but it should be part of your regular health routine. Things can change and the sooner changes are addressed the better. This excellent article by Tony Boyd highlights the need for regular skin checks.]

Tony joined the CRB in Jan 1972 and worked in Plans & Surveys, Road Planning, Advance Planning and Traffic Engineering. In the 1980's and beyond, Tony worked in Planning and Programs, Road System Management and Network and Asset Planning. He retired in 2013.]

I grew in Western Victoria at Ararat and around the small towns of Moyston, Pomonal and Halls Gap in the Grampians area, or as it is known by the traditional owners, *Gariwerd*. Maybe because of the idyllic nature of the area, I enjoyed riding my bike to various little picturesque places I came to love, as well as bush walking, camping, fishing and swimming at Lake Fyans, running, playing golf, and in later years, rock climbing.

I was an outdoors person in "my element". I considered myself to be very lucky to grow up in that part of rural Victoria and still do. Although the Grampians area has become much busier with tourists in the decades since then, it still feels like I'm going home whenever I go back to that area. However, the downside to my outdoors lifestyle is that, in most years, I would get sunburnt, sometimes quite badly. It was something that would have implications for me later in life.

Back then when I was growing up there was little information about the dangers of the sun's Ultra-Violet rays or the need for sun protection and it was a time before we had SPF50 sunscreens. With Summer upon us, I thought it would be timely to remind members of the risks posed by the sun and the potential consequences from skin cancers. Often the consequences of skin damage from exposure to the sun's UV rays do not become apparent until decades later.

I should preface some of my following comments by indicating that I have no formal medical training. The comments are largely based on personal knowledge and lived experience in dealing with various health issues in my more mature years, particularly associated with various types of skin cancer. Specific advice about skin cancer is best sought from a doctor, either a GP or dermatologist.

There are 3 common types of skin cancer:

- *Basal cell carcinoma (BCC)*

BCC is the most common type of skin cancer accounting for about 70% of non-melanoma skin cancers. It begins in the lower layer of the epidermis (top, outer layer of the skin). It can appear anywhere on the body but most commonly develops on parts of the body that receive high or intermittent sun exposure (head, face, neck, shoulders and back). BCC is slow growing and generally remains localised. Risks from BCC are generally low.

- *Squamous-cell carcinoma (SCC)*

SCC accounts for about 30% of non-melanoma skin cancers. It begins in the upper layer of the epidermis and usually appears where the skin has had most exposure to the sun (head, neck, hands, forearms and lower legs). SCC generally grows quickly over weeks or months. Once SCC tumours reach a certain size they can impose a significant risk of spreading to other parts of the body.

- *Melanoma*

Melanoma is the most aggressive and most deadly type of "common" skin cancer that begins in the melanocytes, the cells that produce melanin, which gives skin its colour. Fortunately,

it's prevalence is much less than for BCC's or SCC's. Early detection is crucial in the treatment of Melanoma. It is highly treatable if caught early.

Fortunately, I have never had Melanoma, although I have known some former CRB/VicRoads people that have. However, in my mature age years, I have had well over 100 BCC and several dozen SCC, mainly a particular type of invasive SCC on my head and neck that have caused some significant health issues.

Although less invasive than Melanoma, SCC should not be ignored if people suspect they may have such a lesion. Once tumours increase to a certain size, parts can break off and establish elsewhere below the skin, or in glands, lymph nodes, organs, and even track along nerves, including a nerve running from around the Parotid gland near the jaw to behind the ear and into the brain. Major surgery may be required to excise such secondary tumours and may need to be followed up by further treatment involving radiotherapy or immunotherapy.

I have had surgery to remove my parotid gland³ from the right side of my face and my Level 1, 2 and 3 lymph nodes from my neck and have subsequently had 3 courses of radiotherapy, each requiring treatment every weekday for 4 or 6 weeks. Such treatments can be physically draining as well as requiring a significant time commitment.

SCC should not be taken lightly and removed when still small. Although radiotherapy can be an effective treatment for skin cancers, there are some limitations. Radiation cannot be applied to areas where radiation has previously been given as there is a significant risk of damaging the underlining tissues if further radiation is given. This means that care needs to be taken to avoid overlapping various fields of radiation and may limit treatment options in instances of tumours re-occurring.

The susceptibility to developing skin cancers is influenced by several factors, some environment related, such as exposure to ultraviolet light, others related to genetic risk. Fair skinned, blue-eyed people are more at risk of developing skin cancer than people with darker skin. A specialist I occasionally see says, in Australia, Celtic skin is particularly susceptible to skin cancers because of inherent genetic risk.

My maternal Finnegan grandparents emigrated from Ireland. My mother had a long history of the type of invasive SCC that I now have. In her early 70's she had her nose amputated when an SCC progressed into the nose cartilage. She later had a clever nose reconstruction, but that's another story. My paternal Boyd ancestors also originally came from Ireland but have lived in Australia and New Zealand for several generations. However, as far as I can recall my father did not have any troubles with skin cancer. I am a twin. My twin does not seem to have inherited the same risk of skin cancer that my mother and I have had despite growing up in the same environment.

In 2010 my cancer risk was considerably increased when I was fortunate to receive a kidney donation after dialysing for several years. My donated kidney, which I nick-named "George", made a huge difference to my quality of life. George and I look after each other well and I greatly value our association. I do not want to have to resume my previous dialysis regime. I noticed in the April 2024 VRA Newsletter 256 an article referring to Reg Marslen's dialysis journey. Long term dialysis is hard. I didn't have to dialyse for 10 years like Reg; 7 years was hard. I can empathise with Reg. To dialyse successfully for a long time, you need to be disciplined with strict adherence to fluid limits and diet restrictions, particularly potassium

³ (Ed.) The parotid gland is one of the major salivary glands located in front of and beneath each ear, responsible for producing saliva that aids in chewing and digestion.

intake, and have a good working fistula⁴, which I no longer have. I wish Reg all the best with his continuing journey.

One of the complications for transplant patients like me is the need to regularly take immunosuppressants to prevent rejection as the body recognises transplanted organs as foreign material. Because the immune system is suppressed, transplant recipients are at a higher risk of infection and the body has much greater difficulty combating cancer cells when they develop. Their risk of developing cancers is therefore much higher.

An alternative form of treatment for people whose immune system is not suppressed is immunotherapy whereby a drug or combination of drugs is used to target and kill off particular cancer cells and, at the same time boost the body's natural immune system. However, for transplant patients, this greatly increases the risk of rejection, something that few transplant patients would embrace. I certainly do not want to lose George and go back onto long term dialysis.

The Austin Hospital has had some success with treating some transplant patients with immunotherapy without causing rejection as part of a carefully managed plan involving several areas of discipline. It has been suggested to me that at some stage I may need to consider a course of immunotherapy depending on the reoccurrence and location of future cancers. Should the need arise, a contingency plan would be to stop taking immunosuppressants and instead take a high dose of cortisone-based drugs to manage the risk of rejection before starting any treatment. The risk and consequences associated with that is something I will need to address if and when the need arises further down the track.

The clear message I would like to leave is that "prevention is a better cure". As retirees belonging to an older generation, many of us will remember the "Slip, Slop, Slap" television campaign launched in 1981 involving the mascot Sid the Seagull, who told us to slip on a shirt or rash guard, slop on sunscreen, and slap on a sun hat. It later evolved to also include "seek shade" and "slide on some sunglasses". It is a message that is still relevant today. Further information about the campaign is found at:

<https://www.cancer.org.au/cancer-information/causes-and-prevention/sun-safety/campaigns-and-events/slip-slop-slap-seek-slide>

I think the best advice is, if possible, stay out of the sun when the UV index is high. I suspect most of us these days have would very limited influence over our children in selling the sun protection message. However, I would like to think that we can still have some influence over our grandchildren, and in some cases great grandchildren. Schools generally do a great job selling the message of wearing hats and seeking shade when outside. We can help reinforce that message.

As retirees we will have a wide range of interests. Whatever you do, protect yourself but, importantly, have Fun!

Tony Boyd

Further information about skin cancers can be found at the Cancer Council Australia at:

<https://www.cancer.org.au/cancer-information/types-of-cancer/skin-cancer>

From John Liddell – Cancer treatment

I had an article in the April 2024 Newsletter about having a Stage 3 Melanoma and had commenced an immunotherapy program for 12 months. At the end of that period, I had a

⁴ (Ed.) A fistula is an abnormal connection or passageway between two parts of the body that do not normally connect, such as organs or blood vessels. In Reg and Tony's cases it would have been surgically created to facilitate dialysis.

further PET scan but unfortunately there was still cancer. I had 2 more operations and I have just received a welcome PET scan report to show no evidence of any further cancer. I have to go back for further tests in 6 months just to check all is OK. The moral to this story is to have regular skin checks and follow up on any dodgy lumps, etc.

John Liddell

From Nicole Carter – National Transport Research Organisation (NTRO)

[Editor’s note: In our October Newsletter, we published a notice from the NTRO (formerly ARRB) inviting our Members to reconnect and reminisce on the legacy they had built together at the organisation’s Heritage Day celebration in December 2025.]

On Friday, 5 December, NTRO proudly marked Heritage Day at our Port Melbourne Head Office. This annual tradition honours our journey from ARRB to NTRO and the incredible people who shaped it.

We were delighted to welcome former staff and alumni from across Australia and New Zealand for a day of connection and celebration. Guests enjoyed a BBQ lunch, heartfelt farewells to retiring colleagues, and an update on NTRO’s exciting future—expanding into new markets, building global partnerships, and driving innovation.

This year’s focus showcased the evolution of our Infrastructure Measurement fleet, from its humble beginnings to today’s advanced technology, and offered a glimpse into the future through our Data Reform project.

Heritage Day is more than a celebration—it’s a reminder of the legacy we share and the future we’re creating together.

Many thanks for all your assistance in making this event a success!

Kind regards, Nicole

Leader Events, Certification & Events. NTRO



At the Heritage Day luncheon. From L to R. Richard Yeo, Lance Midgley, Anatoly Shulkin



At the Heritage Day luncheon. From L to R. John Rebecchi, Brendan Gleeson



At the Heritage Day luncheon. From L to R. Jim Johnson-Clarke, Michael Tziotis (standing), Tom Wood, Brendan Gleeson, Peter Frazer

From John Rebecchi - NTRO Heritage Day 2025

I was extremely pleased to be invited to the NTRO Heritage Day as I have had a close association with its predecessor ARRB and its personnel through most of my working career spanning more than 50 years, primarily associated with pavements and bituminous surfacing.

My interactions with ARRB have included participation as CRB/VicRoads representative, industry representative and independent expert, on national working groups such as the Austroads Pavement Research Group, National Asphalt Research Group and Bituminous Surfacing Reference Group as well as specific Austroads and Industry funded projects.

I was also deeply involved in close collaboration with various individuals on the development of Austroads guides, specifications, test methods and Australian Standards.

The presentation of awards was preceded by an overview of the current organisation and some highlights of its development. One point that particularly stood out was the impact of technology on the collection and reporting of data. A key turning point was the arrival of the PC. It heralded the change from manual input of data into mainframe computers that generated copious quantities of paper, to an era where data could be collected and reported in real time.

John Rebbechi

WHAT'S COMING UP?

Our AGM in 2026 - by Jill Earnshaw

Our 2026 Annual General Meeting will take place on Monday 2 March at the Waverley RSL. All Members are invited to attend. The meeting will commence upstairs at 11.30 am. The meeting will be followed by lunch in the RSL's dining room.

It is the first AGM under our new Rules of Association, approved by members at our last AGM. These rules resulted in a change to our financial year and, in accordance with best practice for incorporated associations, a change to voting at this and future AGMs.

All Members will be sent an email explaining these new rules and their implications including the need for a quorum of 10% of the members needing to vote at the AGM. As we are aware many of our Members are unable to attend our AGMs, we will be introducing a Proxy nomination form which members can complete and return to the Secretary before 23 February.

This will assist us to ensure a voting quorum to ratify the recommendations being put to members. Please keep an eye out for that email which will include detailed explanations; consider whether or not you can come to the AGM and, if not, complete the Proxy nomination form to ensure we have a quorum for approval of the motions put to the AGM

Members are welcome to email the Secretary (jillmearnshaw@gmail.com) and submit items of business for consideration at the AGM.

Important matters to be dealt with at the AGM:

2025 Annual Report

Our current President, John Wright, will present the annual report to Members.

2026 Committee

Any member interested in joining the Association's Committee for 2026 or in the future should contact the Secretary, Jill Earnshaw (jillmearnshaw@gmail.com) who can email you a nomination form which would need to be completed and returned to Jill before 19 January 2026.

The existing Committee will be putting a motion to the AGM, recommending that the number of positions on the Committee remain at 12. Should the number of nominations exceed the number of Committee positions available, an election may be required. Members will be asked to vote to approve the Committee for 2026.

Other matters

Having been reviewed, the annual accounts will be presented, the Honorary Auditor will be appointed for 2026 and a motion will be put to members to fix the joining fee and membership subscription (currently and recommended to continue to remain at \$50 once only) for the upcoming year.

The 2026 Program of Events will be presented at the meeting so get those pens and diaries out. The 2026 program will kick off on 2 February with an Occasional Lunch at Doncaster Shoppingtown Hotel. All events will continue to be advertised in our regular newsletters and emails to members and continue to be open to Members, family, friends and former colleagues.

The March AGM will be followed by what is always a very pleasant lunch at the Waverley RSL so we hope to see you there.

Our Christmas Luncheon. 11 December 2025

Once again, our annual Christmas luncheon at the Glen Waverley RSL was a grand occasion with about 100 people attending. It was our fifth Christmas at Glen Waverley RSL and the meals and service were still first class. We were pleased to be advised by our Treasurer Ken Vickery (who is also the Treasurer for the Glen Waverley RSL), that despite ongoing construction activities for the proposed Glen Waverley Suburban Rail Loop complex, this great venue would continue to be available for our functions until at least 2028.

The President, John Wright, acknowledged Stan Hodgson, now in his 96th year, as the most senior Member present, and foreshadowed a great program of Association events for 2026, including a regional visit to Geelong and a tour of the Alstom facility in Dandenong. The President thanked all the Committee members for their support, welcomed new Members Christina Koh and Sue Grosman, and encouraged interested Members to nominate as Committee members at the Annual General Meeting in March.



From L to R. David Harris, Alan Collins, David Williamson, Lloyd Rowe, Lance Midgley, Peter McCulloch, John Rebecchi, Geoff Symons



From L to R. Bill Turner, Lyn Briggs, Linda Zamprogno, Elaine McClure, Annette Willis, Heather Thompson, Ken Vickery, Doug Thompson



From L to R. John Wright, Rosslyn Wright, Claire Flowers, Graham Stone, Stan Hodgson, Robin Schubert, Gernot Schubert, John Liddell



From L to R. Warren Blandy, David Keam, Neil Tull, Mervyn Seeney, Jill Earnshaw, Kevin Rhodes, Evelyn Ferris



From L to R. Gary Veith, Glenys Veith, Jan Weinberg, Tracee Piper, John Ford, Jan Heggart



Around the table from the Left. John Nation, Jim Trajcevski, Dick Williams, John Griffith, Bruce Thompson, Martin Habgood, John Gavin, Howard Hughes, David Jellie



Around the table from the left. Bill Saggars, Leslie Goddard, John Finlay, Karen McDonald, Patsy Kennedy, Joan Gilmer (obscured), Jim Webber, Ted Goddard



From L to R. Ron Hawken, Ian Thiele, John Harper, Kevin Mintern-Lane, Janet Brown, Frank Brown, Tricia Head, Brian Head



Around the table clockwise from the front. Swarna Bharatula, Sybil Yardin, Roger Thorp, Eve Grimm, Graham Gilpin PSM, Richard Warwick, Paul Donovan, Alan Mackinlay



Around the table from the left. Ted Barton PSM, Mary Barton, Pam Paul, Ross Paul, Peter Ryan, Paul Petrides, Neville Schmidt, Warren Butcher, John Cunningham.



Around the table clockwise from the front. Allison Pinto, Christina Koh, Sue Grosman, Iris Whittaker, Mark Knudsen, Leanne Knudsen, Julie Cooper, Paul Cooper, Richard Bortko



Around the table clockwise from the front. Geoff Lawrence, David Dix, Paul Tucker, Andrew Ricketson, Nola Ricketson, Noela Tucker, Gerry Turner, John Allen

Special thanks were given to Ken Vickery and the RSL staff who provided us with an excellent lunch and to Jill Earnshaw for assembling the two festive Christmas hampers, and Iris Whittaker for ensuring everybody had a name tag.

Thanks also to Nick Szwed, who took most of these photos. If you haven't found yourself yet, please visit our Website at <https://vicroadsassociation.org/social/>. In addition to the photos, we also have a video, kindly provided by John Nation, who can be seen in the centre picture on P.13 videoing the event. The video is also on the VRA Website

and can be accessed at <https://vicroadsassociation.org/2025-vra-eoy-lunch/>.

VicRoads Association Golf Trophy Award naming

At the Christmas Luncheon, the President acknowledged Jim Webber's fine work in initiating the VRA Golf tournament and his successful management of that event over the last 10 years.

In recognition of Jim's effort, the Committee unanimously agreed at its November meeting to name the trophy after him. The 2025 winner of the trophy was Roy Gilmour, who has now won it five times and was unable to attend to receive it.

The winners of the VicRoads Association Golf Jim Webber award are as follows

2014 Ken Vickery

2015 Jim Webber

2016 John Ford

2017 Rob Gilpin

2018 Roy Gilmour

2019 Ken Mathers & Jim Webber

2020 Not awarded (covid)

2021 Roy Gilmour

2022 Not awarded (course flood repairs)

2023 Roy Gilmour

2024 Roy Gilmour

2025 Roy Gilmour



Jim Webber and John Wright announcing the Jim Webber Golf Trophy Award

VicRoads 2000 – the Forgotten Project – by John Wright

In 1988, just before the RCA's short life ended, the *VicRoads 2000 Rural Arterial Roads Strategy*, one of the largest community consultation projects ever undertaken by the Authority (and possibly *any* State Government body before or since), came into being.

I'd like to think that Victoria's rural communities still remember it – perhaps even with affection, because it was arguably the first time any government had gone out of its way to hear their concerns about anything. However, because of its nature I suspect that some of us may not have heard of this amazing project.

The author of the Strategy's name *VicRoads 2000* is unknown but it appeared in RCA documents as early as March 1988, reflecting its ambitious long-term program and preceding the official trading name of the new Roads Corporation (*VicRoads*)⁵ by about sixteen months.

The VicRoads 2000 consultation process was a major change from the CRB's authoritative, top-down approach to planning road projects, in which initial community consultation was generally limited to confidential discussions with municipal engineers.

The incoming Cain Government wanted the RCA to be far more consultative, and in 1983 it summarily transferred a number of the RCA's road planning staff to the Ministry of Transport (MoT), led by the Assistant Chief Planning Engineer Jim Webber, to immerse them in direct community consultations for major road-related matters.

In 1987, the RCA regained its road planning responsibility and all of its seconded staff. One of them was Jim Webber, who had spent four years with the Ministry involved with major community consultation exercises, most notably the Pascoe Vale Road Relief Study led by Brian Fitts, which led to the construction of the first section of the Western Ring Road.

Early in 1988 Jim was tasked with setting up a new project to assess the future needs of Victoria's rural roads through close, *initial* consultation with rural communities, authorities and groups. Great care was taken to ensure that the public consultation process would be as inclusive as possible, and that no significant interest group or issue would be inadvertently excluded. A State-level Steering Group was created to oversee the entire process, from identifying road needs and issues to determining strategies and a program for their implementation.

The Steering Group, representing 17 different community, road user and industry groups, Local Government and State agencies, was initially chaired by Jim Webber and later, in mid-1989, by Colin Jordan - VicRoads' new Director Corporate Development. One of the Group's first actions was to engage two leading consultants, *John Stanley Associates* and *John Henshall Associates* to prepare issue papers for discussion at each of the twelve planned regional workshops⁶, which they would also host and later prepare summary reports.

An RCA project team was set up to manage the outputs of the Steering Group, assess the identified needs and develop appropriate strategies. It was initially managed by Greg



Jim Webber. From a photo taken by the *Hamilton Spectator* in February 1990

⁵ It is believed that Colin Jordan was influential in applying part of the Project's name to the new organisation

⁶ RCA staff, including Kerry Willis and Jill Earnshaw from Public Consultation, assisted at the workshops.

Marriager until January 1989, followed by Rob Aitken and later, in July 1990 by me. The team included policy analysts Joan Gilmer (from Materials Division), Tony Hillman and Warren Smith (both from Bridge), John Tinkler and from January 1989 - me, with admin. and drafting support from John Waters, Santo Perrone and Shirley Buckwell.

In 1988, community workshops were held at Bairnsdale, Traralgon, Ballarat, Horsham, Geelong, Shepparton, Wangaratta, Warrnambool, Mildura, Kew and Frankston⁷, followed by a further workshop in Melbourne to discuss statewide issues. They were enthusiastically attended by a broad cross-section of community groups, farmers, manufacturers, business organisations, industry associations, sawmillers, mining companies, transport companies, bus

operators, tourist operators, conservationists, trade unionists, government agencies and local governments.

Joan Gilmer, who attended many of the workshops, recalled that issues differed widely between regions, with the Mildura meeting focussed on its strategic 'crossroads' position between Sydney, Adelaide, Melbourne and Broken Hill, while the Horsham and Wangaratta workshops wanted to better cater for the large numbers of South Australians transiting their regions to access Victoria's snowfields.

The Gippsland workshops were concerned with tourism, the lack of good north-south freight routes and the impacts of the forestry industry on its key arterial roads.

Not all workshop attendees saw roads as transport corridors or social connectors. Naturalists viewed rural road reserves as vital areas for conserving rare flora and as fauna habitats and pathways through otherwise mainly cleared land, while farmers also valued them for moving livestock on the hoof, and as an occasional source of fodder.

With the initial community road needs and issues identified, the project team started work to utilise the consultants' reports and called upon a wide range of talent and knowledge within the RCA (and later, VicRoads) to provide road data, analysis and expertise. As many as 50 staff from the Regions, Road Safety,

SAW YOUR WORKSHOP ON ... DECIDED TO DROP IN



YOU would have to be keen about your job to attend to business on the other side of the world during a sightseeing tour.

Dr Uli Brannolte, an engineer attached to the University of Karlsruhe in southern Germany dropped into a Road Construction Authority workshop in Morwell last week.

Dr Brannolte, pictured above left with local RCA boss Norm Butler, is in Australia to attend the Australian Road Research Board conference in Canberra but he had some touring time to take in the sights of Melbourne and the Latrobe Valley.

He heard about the RCA workshop and told the Express he thought it would be good to see how we went about solving our road problems. Dr Brannolte said this region, with its hilly terrain, agriculture and timber was similar to his home, located on the edge of the Black Forest.

"I liked seeing the way you discuss problems openly," Dr Brannolte said adding that he found the workshop "very interesting".



turned to the centre circle and bounce the ball to re-start play.

It was a comical sight with only Warragul player in the square to 'contend the bounce and players sprinting from the wing to take up their positions as the ball was booted forward.

By the way, Warragul won the match by 44 points.

CENTRAL Gippsland Hospital is looking for a hospital spokesperson.

The hospital advertised the new created position at the weekend as part of its drive to develop and implement a program to promote better health in the

Clipping from a Morwell Newspaper in 1988 about the Morwell VicRoads 2000 Workshop, featuring Regional Manager Norm Butler and a visiting German Engineer.

⁷ It was my visit to the Frankston Workshop in 1988 that impelled me to seek a transfer from Dandenong Division to the VicRoads 2000 Project team, where I commenced under Rob Aitken in January 1989.

Traffic Analysis, Pavement Management, Program Development, Funding, Community Consultation and other areas, were involved. (A complete list of the people involved can be found on page 21.)

The team's approach, as intended by the Steering Group, was centred on meeting community needs, with an emphasis on safe and efficient operation and preservation of the existing network.

New road construction mostly took a back seat. Consideration was also given to improved integration of rail services and their future potential for greatly expanded rural development due to expected faster interstate and intrastate operations.



Team members Rob Aitken and Joan Gilmer at Hamilton in 1990

The proposed strategies were grouped under the headings of Road Safety, Access/Mobility, Economic Development and Environment programs, which would provide the framework of a *Statewide Report* with a global view of the ten-year plan, and *Regional Reports* with similar but more detailed programs for each on the five rural regions⁸.

The community consultation continued beyond the initial regional workshops. In 1989 and 1990 during the development of the strategies, there were further, state-wide regional community meetings attended by members of the Steering Group and the project team to discuss potential strategies and gain additional feedback.

In 1990, with the strategy development essentially complete, a further round of regional forums and meetings took place to present the proposed rural arterial road strategy to local communities in major rural centres. The strategy was well received.

The team also prepared discussion papers about and including road safety, conservation and the environment, road asset management and social development. With the benefit of 35 years of hindsight it is interesting to look back at some of the issues thought to be important at that time, and what was then thought might be happening in the year 2000 and beyond.

In 1989, transport of wheat grown within 100 kilometres of Melbourne was regulated to rail to protect railway workers' jobs. Victorian stockfeed producers, who had already shunned rail because it was costly and unreliable⁹, were utilising the cross-border transport exemption to more cheaply source huge amounts of grain by road from as far away as Queensland. The use of B-Doubles, which would have allowed more efficient Victorian transport of wheat, was banned on most Victorian rural roads for the same reason.

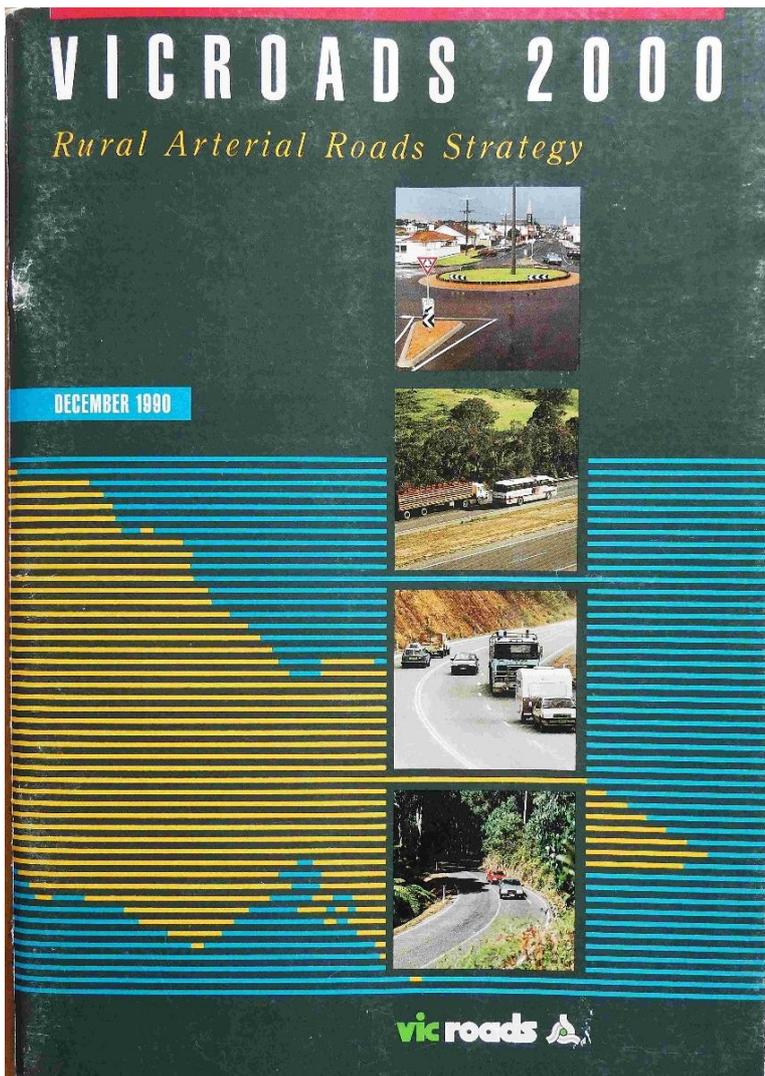
In the region surrounding Melbourne, concerns were expressed about where the vast quantities of crushed rock and sand needed for the concrete and roads that would underpin the future growth of Melbourne, would be coming from, given that many of the existing sources conveniently located close to the city, were nearing exhaustion.

The team's tentative peek into the future pondered whether a second major airport would be serving Melbourne's eastern side near Clyde after 2000. The much discussed *Very Fast Train* was expected to dramatically increase development in remote eastern Victoria, and it was thought that a long-proposed upgrade of the poor Melbourne to Sydney railway alignment in

⁸ With the creation of VicRoads in July 1989, the RCA's ten regions were reduced to five.

⁹ Also, rail delivered goods did not fit well with 'just-in-time' operations aimed at minimising the material stockpiling costs of many large industries.

southern NSW might greatly reduce intercapital travel time. In western Victoria there were hopes of geothermal electricity generation and intensive aquaculture industries. Thirty five years later we are still waiting for these things to happen.



On 13 December 1990, the VicRoads 2000 Rural Arterial Roads Strategy was officially launched at Morwell by the Minister for Transport, Peter Spyker, and shortly after, the project team prepared and published the Strategy documents so that all the communities involved could see that their voices had been heard in its development.

Thousands of high quality, coloured documents setting out the strategies, along with two volumes of discussion papers, were printed at great cost, with plans to distribute them widely throughout the State.

Unbelievably, an edict from the VicRoads financial area deemed that the Corporation's strict provisions on financial cost recovery were to be applied. As a consequence, each report and discussion paper would carry a price of about \$80.

Rural organisations, newspapers, libraries and individuals who had been anticipating the release of the reports, reacted in disbelief, but the ruling held. I would have been

surprised if more than a hundred documents were actually purchased. It was an enormous 'own goal' by VicRoads.

With the project team's work ended, its team members moved to other areas. The next step was to be the establishment of *Monitoring and Review Groups* at Statewide and Regional levels, with members drawn from community, Local Government and State agencies. Meeting three times a year, they were intended to provide input to the development of strategic program guidelines in October, the bid process in February and the funds allocation process in May.

With their involvement ended, the project team (and most other people in VicRoads, for that matter) had no way of knowing what actually followed, or whether the Strategy was achieved within its 10-year goal. However, given ongoing support by VicRoads' Regional Managers and its CEO's – particularly Reg Patterson and Colin Jordan, it would appear that the Strategy framework *did* continue to inform VicRoads funding decisions for many years afterwards, including during the eight-years of the Kennett Government and, according to Norm Butler, in the *Linking Victoria* Strategy, launched by the Bracks Labor Government in 1999.

Norm Butler, who had been Regional Manager Eastern Victoria, recently provided me with a long list of actions, including the creation of three Community Road Safety Councils, highway duplications and bridge replacements, that had been identified for his region by VicRoads 2000. He believes that all of those actions were effectively carried out by the year 2000.

Joan Gilmer told me that the Calder Highway upgrading, given a high priority in the VicRoads 2000 Strategy, had been largely completed by the year 2000. The balance of major Calder Highway works was carried out under the *Linking Victoria Strategy*, which was developed by VicRoads in 1996 and would have been informed by the recommendations of VicRoads 2000.

I believe that Norm and Joan's comments would be largely mirrored by those who lived and served at the time in all of the regions involved.

All told, VicRoads 2000 was a worthwhile effort that all those involved, from the staff of the RCA/VicRoads to the people in Victoria's rural communities, can rightfully be proud of.

VICROADS 2000 PROJECT ORGANISATION

PROJECT TEAM

Robert Aitken (Project Manager from January 1989)
 Greg Mariager (Acting Project Manager July 1988 - January 1989)
 John Wright (from March 1989, Project Manager from July 1990)
 Joan Gilmer
 Tony Hillman
 Warren Smith (until November 1988)
 John Waters (from January 1989)
 Santo Perrone (until March 1990)
 Shirley Buckwell (from January 1989)
 John Tinkler (March - July 1990)

Regional Support

Norm Butler
 Ron Glasser
 John Wilson
 Ian Inglis
 Colin Roy
 Colin Kosky
 Bob Scott
 Bruce Phillips
 Peter Ransom
 Ted Goddard
 Rod Cottrill
 John Waddell
 Bob Adams
 Peter Baird
 Bruce McClure
 David Anderson
 Alastair Robinson
 Garry Titheridge
 Alan Harman
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 Bruce Cochrane
 Neville Hallam
 Bob Citroen
 Don Commons
 Iva Day
 Pat Meehan
 David Rowland
 Howard Ellis
 Bill Kay
 Gary Gray

OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

Many people from other organisations and elsewhere in the Roads Corporation made significant contributions to this project and are acknowledged in Discussion Papers Volumes 1 & 2. Others who gave specialist advice and assistance are:

Jill Earnshaw	Community consultation
Kerry Willis	" "
Garth Stevens	Pavement management systems
Jon Willis	Funding
Fotios Spiridonos	Traffic analysis
Mark Knudsen	"
Barry Gutteridge	"
Dimitrios Polymenakos	"
John Cunningham	Road Safety
John Sliogeris	"
Kevin Haddingham	Access/mobility & funding
Bill Saggars	Program development
Peter Bon	Computer Support
Cheryl Lewin	" "
Leanne Buckland	Drafting assistance
John Irwin	" "
Ken Louey	" "
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Corporate Affairs	Desk Top Publishing, Editing & Photography
Graphic Services	Printing

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LEST WE FORGET

We continue the stories of men of the CRB who lost their lives during the Second World War – although there is some doubt about two of them.

Flight Lieutenant John Oswald Graham, 418101

John was born in in 1916 in Mont Albert and was a Pay Clerk with the CRB when he enlisted in April 1942. He had a BCom from the University of Melbourne. His initial postings were Cootamundra, West Sale and Nhill. He became a Leading Aircraftman in July 1942. He married his wife, Joyce, in 1942.

His brother, D. S. Graham, was a Wing Commander in the RAAF.

Flight Lieutenant John Oswald Graham of the Royal Australian Air Force died on 21 May 1945 aged 28 years and he is buried at Labuan War Cemetery in Malaysia.

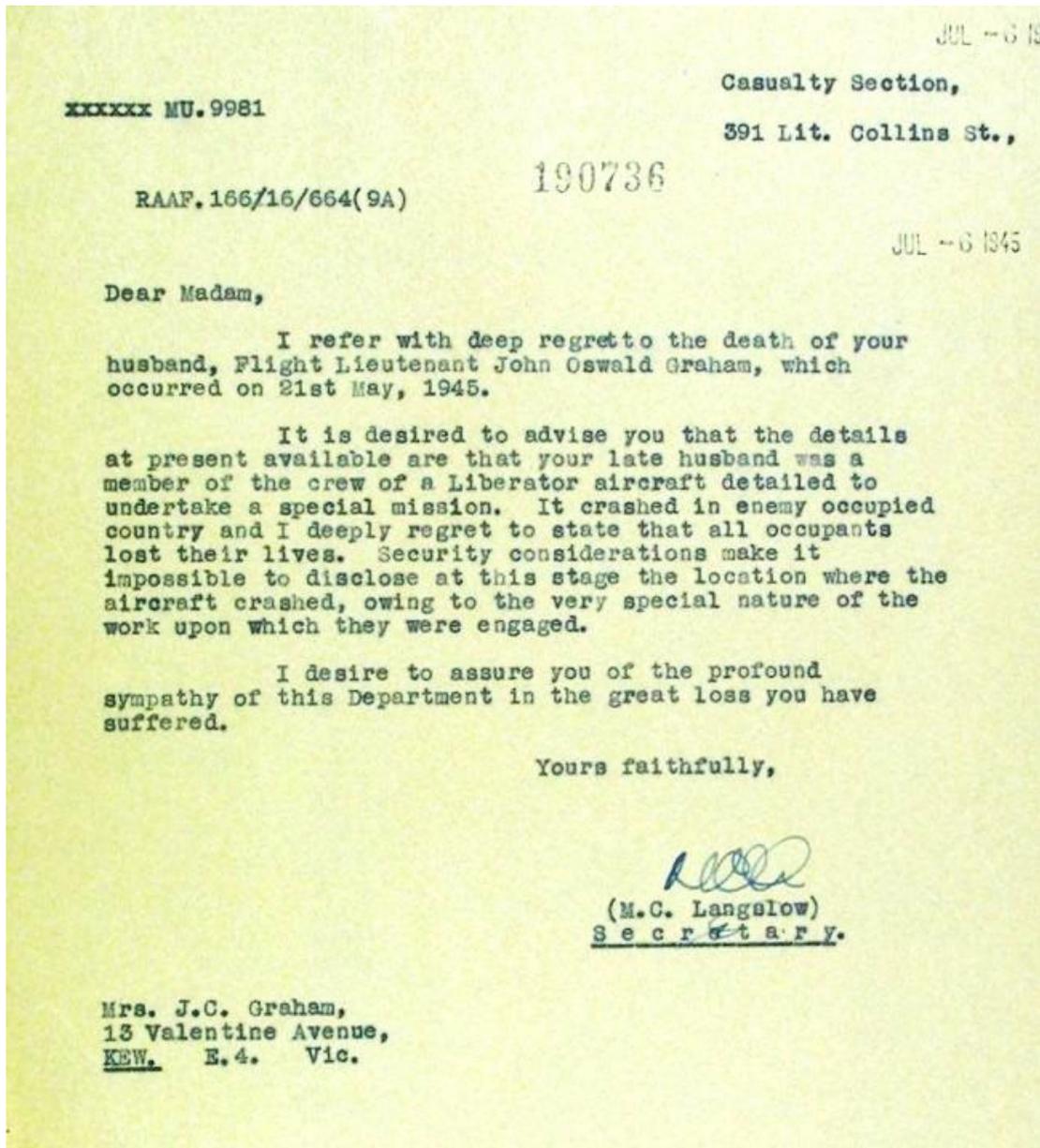
He died on a secret operation in North Borneo in No. 200 Flight Liberator aircraft A72-177. It was lost at 0555 hours on 21 May 1945 with the crew of Flight Lieutenant Keith Emmett and Z Special Force personnel on a Services Reconnaissance Department (SRD) sortie.

In fine weather and on the fifth pass of a supply mission to the Bawing Drop Zone, the aircraft struck a tall tree on a hill to the south east of the zone and crashed, killing all 14 people on board.

A witness report compiled by Major R. Combe states that the aircraft appeared to be flying low with engines unthrottled leading up to the accident. The aircraft crashed two miles west of the village of Melabong.



John Oswald Graham.



This was the original letter sent to John's wife about the circumstances of the crash. A similar one was sent to his parents.

The bodies were temporarily buried at the site and photographs were taken of the graves and sent to the next of kin.



John's temporary grave

XXXXXXXXXXXXX LU.9981

217894

Casualty Section

391 Lit. Collins St.,

OCT 23 1945

RAAF. 166/16/664(20A)

Dear Madam,

I refer to previous correspondence with regard to your late son, Flight Lieutenant John Oswald Graham, who was killed in air operations in Borneo on the 21st May, 1945.

Your son was a member of the crew of a Liberator aircraft engaged in dropping supplies in enemy occupied territory in British North Borneo in co-operation with the Australian Military Forces.

The aircraft made five circuits at low altitude over the target area and the supplies were dropped successfully.

After the completion of the fifth circuit the aircraft struck the top of a tall tree and crashed. In the opinion of an eye-witness all the occupants were killed instantly.

The accident took place two miles west of Melabong village at 06 degrees 58 minutes north, longitude 117 degrees 07 minutes east.

All the occupants were buried at the scene of the crash and the graves clearly marked with crosses.

A photograph showing a tribute of respect paid at the graveside is enclosed.

I trust that the above information may be of some comfort to you in your sorrow.

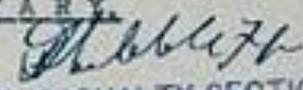
Yours faithfully,



(M.C. Langslow)
SECRETARY

Enc.

Mrs A. I. Graham,
13 Valentine Avenue,
KNE. E.4. VIC.


D. P. S. CASUALTY SECTION
20/10

This letter to John's mother, was written after the war and explains in more detail, the circumstances of her son's death.

John's file in the National Archives comprises 41 pages, the majority of which relate to his death.

Trooper Donald Charles Green, VX111592

The name on the Roll of Honour is D.G. Green but I could not find a record for him in the Nominal Roll for World War Two, the Commonwealth War Graves or the National Australian Archives. Those that had the initials 'D. G.' survived the war. However, I found Donald Charles Green who was born in June 1919 in Bruthen in East Gippsland - who described himself as a foundry worker. He may be the right one but I can't be sure. The Honour Roll may have mistaken the 'C' as a 'G'. There is nothing in his archive which mentions working at the CRB but coming from Bruthen, he could have worked on the roads in Gippsland.

He enlisted in January 1942 at the age of 23 and was attached to the 2nd Armoured Training Regiment. Among other training, he did a course on cookery and he was appointed a Group II Cook at Bendigo. He did further training at Watsonia in October 1942 before returning to Bendigo.

Then, quite abruptly, the file stated that Donald was accidentally drowned at Rochester. The enquiry stated: "*Drowned at Rochester 15.1.43 when engaged in a military exercise on duty. No evidence of negligence.*"

He is buried in the Bendigo Civil Cemetery.

I doubt if we will ever know if Donald Charles Green is the man on the CRB Honour Roll.

Sergeant Frederick (Paul) D'Orsa Hunter, 400504

I think the initials 'F.R.' shown on the Honour Roll are incorrect. There are 44 entries for the surname 'Hunter' on the Department of Veteran Affairs Nominal Roll with a first name starting with an 'F', and of those from Victoria only one of them was killed in the Second World War. He was Frederick D'Orsa Hunter and his story seems to fit. His file has a red diagonal cross over the front cover with the word 'Deceased' on it.

Frederick was born in St Kilda in 1920. He enlisted in the RAAF in September 1940 when he was 19. It was noted that he spent three or four years working as a Junior Clerk doing general office duties.

He attended Christian Brothers' College in East St Kilda and passed his Intermediate Certificate with passes in English, Latin, Physics, Algebra, Geometry and Trigonometry, and Arithmetic. In the first four subjects he gained a first-class pass. He failed French. He was a keen sportsman and played football and cricket with the Catholic Young Men's Society in West St Kilda as well as tennis, squash and swimming.

Like many Australian airmen, Frederick was sent to Canada for training as an Air Observer. He embarked from Sydney on 28 December 1940. He enlisted with the RCAF in Edmonton in December 1940 and embarked for England in June 1941 where he joined 10 Squadron Leeming in December 1941.

In May 1942, he was attached to No. 35 Squadron (RAF), at Linton-on-Ouse in north Yorkshire. At 2200 hours on the night of 19 May 1942, Halifax W1101 took off from Linton-on-Ouse to bomb Mannheim, Germany. Nothing was heard from the aircraft after take-off and it failed to return. The aircraft crashed near Mannheim and all seven crew members were killed. Frederick was 21.



Frederick D'Orsa Hunter



Frederick's headstone at Durnbach War cemetery

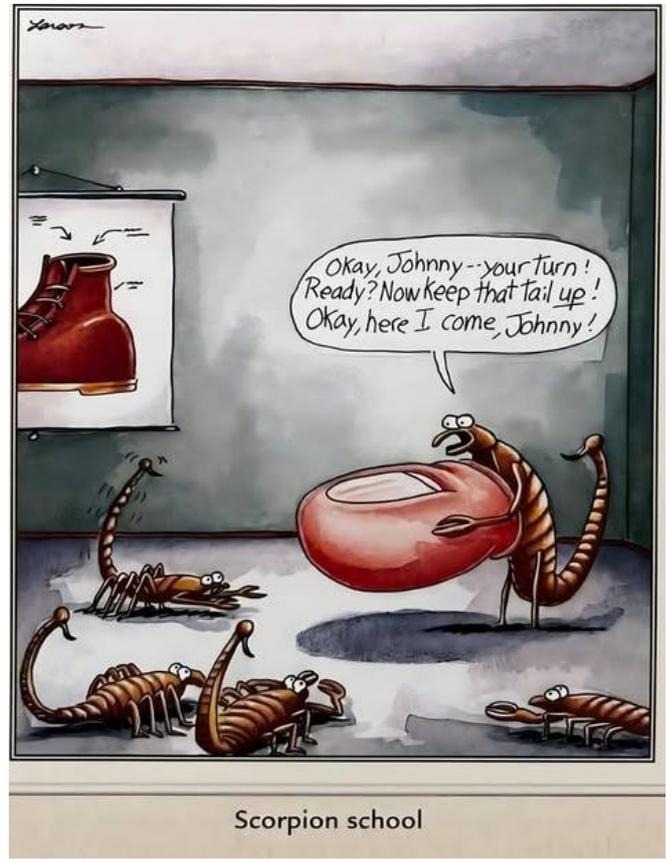
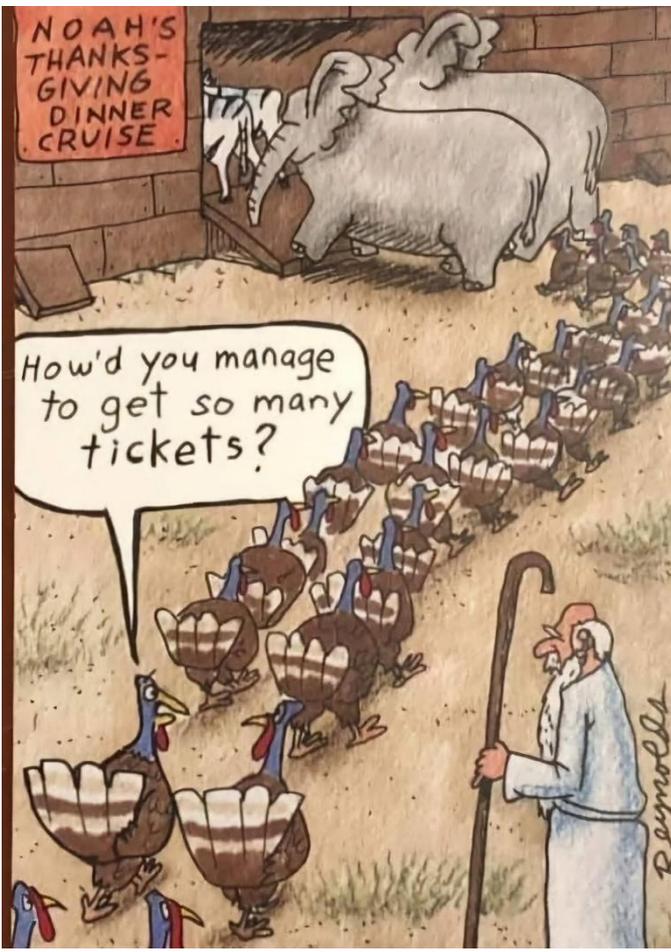
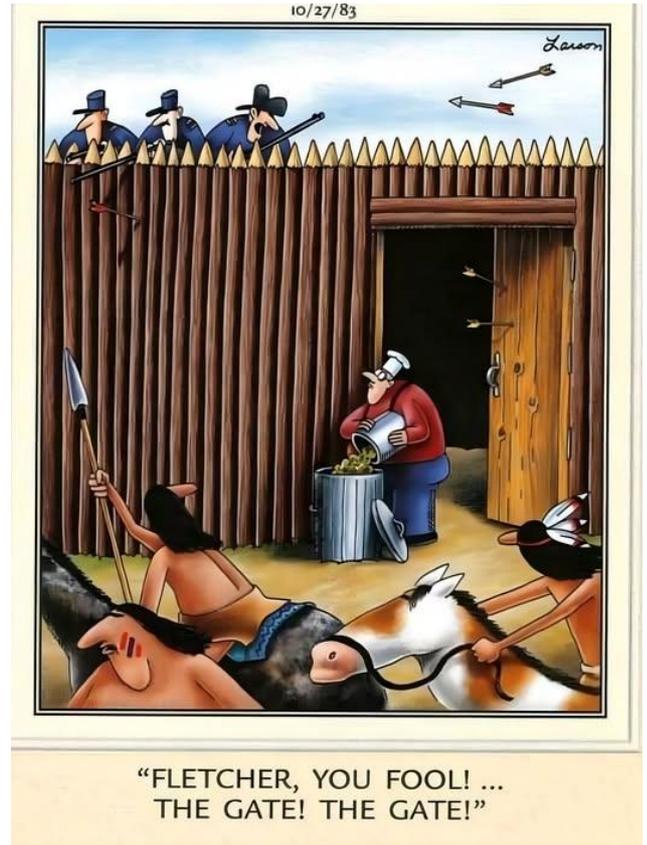
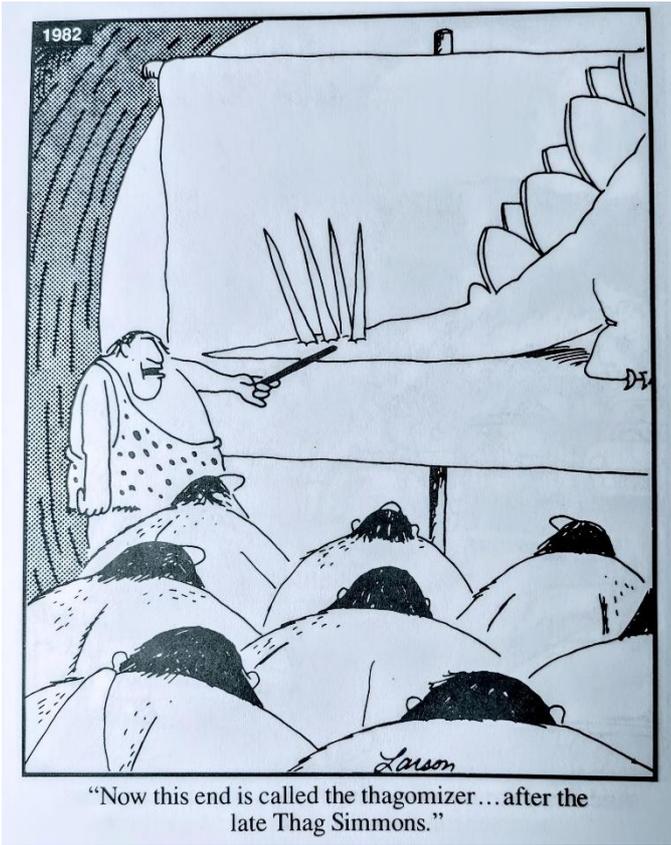
At the end of the war, the Royal Air Force Missing Research and Enquiry Service sent an investigations officer to find the missing aircraft. It and the remains of the crew were located and buried locally with wooden crosses. They were disinterred on 14 October 1947 and reburied at Durnbach War Cemetery in Bavaria.

His family had this epitaph engraved into his headstone: "His life a beautiful memory, his absence a silent sorrow. R.I.P."

Having researched and written this entry for Frederick, there is still some doubt as to whether this is the right person (or not).

I notice in very small writing, an entry on his Application for Air Crew, Frederick has written "At present engaged as buyer for Company of Steel Merchants" which means he may not have worked for the CRB after all. But this memory of him is worth telling.

David Jellie



VicRoads Association Inc

Registration No A0022250S

Membership Application Form

Email completed form to:

Membership Secretary, VicRoads Association Inc

Email Address: irisw25@bigpond.com

First Name Surname
Address

Postcode

Telephone Number Mobile Number

E-mail address *Nominate an email address if you don't personally have your own*

Emergency Contact Name

Emergency Contact Number

Employment in VicRoads and antecedent/previous organisations:

Date From Until To
Organisation/s

Paid Direct Transfer.
Your payment of \$50.00 by electronic transfer should be made into the Association's NAB bank account, details as follow:

VICROADS ASSOCIATION
BSB 083-323
ACC 170934017

Reference - Please ensure that you include your name in the "online" transaction details so that the subscription can be attributed to you.

The information collected from members will be used solely for the purposes of managing the Association and its activities.

I agree to support the purposes of the Association and comply with its rules of the association.

Signed

Date

For more information on VicRoads Association see our website vicroadsassociation.org