



April 2011

# e-Newsletter

**Association of Retired Inspectors of Schools and Senior Educational Administrators**

Please Note that the Booking Slip for the next Luncheon, unlike the traditional Newsletter where it is printed on the last page, is printed at the beginning of this e-Newsletter. This means that you will need to print the **first page** of this document and complete the printed booking slip. It can not be emailed to Jack Harrison but must be posted with a cheque to his home postal address.

## **Booking slip 6th May 2011 Meeting**

Complete and return with your cheque by 14th April to  
**J.T. Harrison, 2 Amalfi Place, Longueville NSW 2066** (phone 9427 5399)

Here is my payment of \$\_\_\_\_\_ (at \$40.00 per head)

for \_\_\_\_\_ and me to attend the ARISSEA luncheon  
at 11.30am for 12.30pm at the Bowlers' Club, 95 York Street, Sydney on Friday 6th May.

Please provide \_\_\_\_\_ vegetarian meal(s).

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_

\* Print your surname here. \_\_\_\_\_

Make your cheque payable to the *Association of Retired Inspectors of Schools* and cross it 'Not negotiable'.

Money cannot be refunded for cancellations made after 21st April



April 2011

# e-Newsletter

Association of Retired Inspectors of Schools and Senior Educational Administrators

## *From the President*



The more things change . . . . .  
Like me, many of you will have been quietly amused by many of the latest 'education' stories currently in the media. Classroom violence and bullying are out of control.

A trial program to devolve authority and funding to school principals has been exposed as a plot to save money. A consulting group has been asked to provide Treasury with advice on reducing expenditure on education. The special education budget is simultaneously out of control and grossly inadequate. Such terrible things would never have happened in our time!

I hope that you enjoy this issue of our newsletter, which is full of good reading. We have reproduced in full the ISEA/ARISSEA agreement that will without doubt develop in importance over the years. As a start, Noila Berglund was part of the selection panel for the 2010 ISEA Award for Excellence in the Administration of Public Education and Vice President Alan Rice attended the presentation function on our behalf.

The winner was Lorraine Rowles, Manager, Teaching and Learning in the Professional Learning and Leadership Development Directorate. The award recognises Lorraine's outstanding contributions to Literacy education.

On a less happy note, at the time of writing, Ron Ikin ARRISEA member and ISEA executive officer, who played such a pivotal role in developing the ISEA/ARISSEA agreement, is seriously ill in St Vincent's Hospital. I have conveyed the best wishes of ARISSEA members to Ron through his partner Kerrie.

The Union Shopper initiative has had mixed reviews, but we are assured that all is well. Secretary Brian Ford is using the time provided by his restored good health to "knock out the bugs". Brian will be happy to offer advice on how to use Union Shopper, and to receive feedback on its value, on [genecom@bigpond.net.au](mailto:genecom@bigpond.net.au).

The Stewart House/Rotary project is still being developed. Richmond Manyweathers and I are working with Stewart House to develop material to go to all Rotary Clubs in the state. I am yet to hear from ARISSEA members who are members of Lions and other service clubs.

It is pleasing to see so many contributions in this newsletter from members both old and new. It is always good to hear about reminiscences and adventures. John Gore's contribution "Life after DET" struck a particular chord with me. His four scenarios are very familiar. We would all have variations on these.

In my case, the 'fixing up the house' exercise has proven to be a never ending project, probably because we changed houses after retirement! I would also add golf (for those of us afflicted with this terrible form of mental disorder) and local volunteer and service club work.

Finally, I would remind everyone that our next luncheon meeting on Friday, May 6<sup>th</sup>, is our Annual General Meeting. Please think about putting your hand up for a spot on the executive. While I don't want to deter men from doing so, I must point out that Pat Morgan is currently the only woman on the executive. Given that so many women have played a major role in ARISSEA in the past, we should try to redress this imbalance. What about it, *(insert your own name)*?

I look forward to seeing you all on May 6<sup>th</sup> at the Bowlers Club..

George Green

### 2010-11 Management Committee

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| President           | George Green   |
| Past President      | Geoff Walton   |
| Vice President      | Alan Rice  |
| Secretary           | Brian Ford   |
| Treasurer           | Richmond Manyweathers                                    |
| Assistant Secretary | Jack Harrison  |
| Welfare Convenor    | John Dugdale   |
| Publications        | Laurie Craddock  |
| Newsletter Editor   | Peter Robinson   |
| Committee Members   | Pat Morgan, Vincent Delany,<br>Alan Pratt, Graham Sims   |
| Volunteer Observers | John Edwards, Bill Grant,<br>Barry Higgins and Syd Smith |

All positions, other than President and Past President, are open for nomination for the May AGM election.

**ISEA says**

### ISEA and ARISSEA Sign Historic Agreement

The ISEA and the Association of Retired Inspectors and Senior Educational Administrators

(ARISSEA) have signed an agreement designed to extend the already historically strong and cooperative links between the two organisations. As the current and former senior officers of the Department, the two groups represent an impressive range of qualified, skilled and experienced educators who share an interest in, and commitment to, public education in NSW.

The Agreement is premised on the following pre-existing conditions:

- 1) Both organisations derive their origins from employment in, and support of, public education;
- 2) ARISSEA maintains an interest in the affairs of the NSW Department of Education and Training;
- 3) Most ARISSEA members are former ISEA members;
- 4) Many ARISSEA and ISEA members maintain personal and professional links; and
- 5) Both organisations exist to support their members.

#### **ISEA-ARISSEA AGREEMENT:**

**The Institute of Senior Educational Administrators (ISEA) and the Association of Retired Inspectors of Schools and Senior Educational Administrators (ARISSEA) commit to the following agreement:**

*1) The ISEA will accept all ARISSEA members, who so choose, as ISEA “Retired” members and therefore to have access to the activities and services currently available to ISEA “Retired” members; providing that:*

*a) There will be no fees applicable to ARISSEA members who avail themselves of ISEA “Retired” membership;*

*b) ARISSEA will provide the ISEA with the email addresses of those members who wish to avail themselves of ISEA “Retired” membership; and*

*c) Those ARISSEA members who do not have email addresses, but wish to be listed as “Retired” ISEA members, will provide the ISEA with ten stamped and addressed envelopes per year.*

*2) As a consequence of 1) above, ARISSEA members who avail themselves of ISEA “Retired” membership, will receive applicable discounts to ISEA functions e.g. dinners, luncheons, workshops, study-tours;\**

*3) Similarly ISEA members, who choose to take part in ARISSEA activities, will receive the same considerations in terms of access and payments as ARISSEA members;*

*4) The President of the ISEA will receive invitations, as a paying guest, to attend all ARISSEA luncheons and other ARISSEA activities;*

5) ISEA Newsletters and invitations will be provided to the ARISSEA Secretary for selective publication in the ARISSEA Newsletters;

6) ARISSEA Newsletters and invitations will be provided to the ISEA Executive Officer for selective publication in the ISEA Newsletters;

7) ARISSEA will nominate a member to the selection panel to choose the annual ISEA Award for Excellence in the Administration of Public Education; and

8) From time to time either organisation may invite a representative from the other to attend a meeting of its governing committee, should there be agenda items of mutual interest.

*(Extract from the February 2011 ISEA Newsletter)*

**Don't forget our first luncheon of the year.**

11.30 for 12.30 May 6th  
The Bowlers Club,  
95 York Street,  
Sydney

Booking slip is on the first page of this Newsletter.  
Completed booking slip and cheque required by  
Jack Harrison by April 14th

***Members say***

### **SPEED READING**

Hornsby

Chick Carey's article in the February Newsletter describing early methods of evaluating school equipment stirred my memory in regard to the reading machines he mentions.

In the fifties and sixties there was considerable interest in these machines and their claimed success in improving reading speed. As Chick points out, they were a particular focus of in-service activities at that time. I remember that Col Harrison, Chief of the Curriculum Section in the old Division of Research and Planning, based his Master of Education thesis on a study of their use in schools.

Some time in the seventies John Vaughan as Director of Studies asked me to examine the available research on these machines. There was considerable research emerging in the United States that seriously questioned the value of the machines and, in particular, the claim that they improved reading speed. The main finding was that the most important factor in improving reading speed was probably the reader's knowledge that he or she was being timed. One researcher even suggested that a \$10 stopwatch might be just as effective as an expensive machine.

After submitting my report I received a rather irate call from the Head of In-service, Tom Ingersoll, who was apparently quite fond of his reading machines. I pointed out that I was not expressing a personal opinion but simply attempting to summarise the available research.

I have no doubt that many teachers, as good teachers always do, made good use of the machines, whatever their flaws. As far as I know, their use in classrooms has long since ceased.

I have always wondered where all those machines finished up. Was it in school storerooms around the state? Perhaps it was in Chick's "Aladdin's Cave"?

**Bruce Kemp**

### ***Members say***

Marsfield

#### **Life after DET**

I was never sure about when I might retire and must admit that the changed tax arrangements for superannuation in 2007 made the decision easier.

My apprehension about retirement was based on four scenarios I had observed in others:

1. travel the world and fix up the house.  
So much for the first year, then what do you do with the rest of your life?
2. travel, travel, travel - narrowing conversation with friends to past and future scenarios and boring the pants off them.
3. establishing meaningful long term relationships (read - childminding) with the grandchildren.
4. getting some part time consultancy work and mix it with other activities. In this case you learn quickly about your use by date and who your friends really are. Some have been successful but not everyone wants the stress of the work and politics that you are retiring from?

While each of these scenarios had its attraction, my wife Elizabeth, and I could not see the rest of our lives being dominated by them even in combination. We wanted something that was intellectually challenging, mildly physically demanding and useful to others.

So it was with some uncertainty that we applied to OM (Operation Mercy) India to spend a period of seven weeks teaching in one of its schools for Dalit children, formally known as *untouchables*.

#### **India**

Twice before, mainly as tourists, we had visited India and on our second visit we learnt about a different India to that of tourist spots and the western style hotels thanks to an Indian family we had made friends with. However, everywhere we travelled we had to come to terms with the poverty, the homelessness, the children on the street who should have been in school and the unacceptable living conditions of so many. Some jobs, for example



on building sites, dealing with garbage and sewerage, that would be done by machines in western countries, were done by hand.



These people were mainly untouchables known as Dalits and lower caste Indians. They believed that people are born into their caste from a previous life and that, according to actions in this life, they could be born again into a better or worse one.

We learnt that the Dalit Freedom Network [www.dalitnetwork.org](http://www.dalitnetwork.org) was established in 2003 to assist Dalits in the areas of education, social justice, economic development and healthcare. The Dalit leadership had given an open invitation to educate their children by establishing English medium schools.

In response, the All India Christian Council set a target of 1,000 schools and OM India is moving to contribute to this target with currently 112 schools established across India. It was in one of these Dalit Education Centres (DECs), Kindergarten to Year 10 schools, that we taught.

There are estimated to be about 250 million Dalits in India and western people hear from higher caste Indians that untouchability no longer exists in India. However, those who have the opportunity to live in India quickly concede that caste discrimination permeates all areas of Indian society.

For many Dalits, their acceptance of caste and social position results in little incentive to change. The Governments, national and state, are caught between opposing political views, some wanting affirmative action for Dalits and others claiming equal access to all.



In providing English medium schools, many Dalit children who would never have the opportunity to go to school or to have English medium education are getting educated. English medium is important because university education is mainly in English and English leads more readily to a job that can change the economic circumstances of a whole family.

### **At school**

After one week's introduction and training, in which we visited a slum on the outskirts of Hyderabad, we went to the Jeedimetla School on the outskirts of Secunderabad. The school has classes from Lower Kindergarten to Year 10. There was one class per year and class sizes ranged from 46 in Class 1 to 18 in Class 9.

Unlike many Indian schools, it had almost as many girls as boys. Year 6 was in an animal shelter with one only small window and without desks and this class took most of my time and got me back to teaching after a break of about 20 years.

The classrooms had chairs and desks, although in the younger classes there were often three students to a double desk. The school had playing equipment, but the playground flooded during rain and took some days to dry. These facilities and conditions are common throughout India.

The students were drawn from the surrounding area and 80 per cent were Dalit, including those from a village made of pipes (large 2m diameter faulty concrete pipes abandoned behind a factory). Of the remaining 20 per cent, some were Muslims and some were from lower caste families in similarly poor economic circumstances. All students paid a token school fee each month (\$1-\$2) with the bulk of the school's income coming from overseas, including sponsorship of individual children.



The school followed the state curriculum and testing program using published textbooks for students and other materials written to the examinations. The curriculum for Years 2-10 comprised daily lessons in Telugu, English, Hindi, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies and some physical education alternated with other subjects in the additional period.

Period 8 each day was set aside for students to do homework, as many had no electricity or could get no help from parents who were uneducated and did not speak English, for across class group activities and for general knowledge learning and practicing English. Teaching followed the state-published textbooks that are crowded with facts, and like the examinations, light on understanding. Rote learning is dominant.

OM India is a Christian organisation and students do receive some teaching about Christianity. However, the integrity of each student's religious beliefs is respected and poverty is the requirement for enrolment, not religion and certainly not caste.

Students from Classes 4-10 played an important part in the running and administration of the school, accepting responsibility for morning assemblies, supervision of students coming to and going from school and during breaks. This aspect of the school was as good, if not better, than anything we have seen in Australia.

### **The students**

Unlike Australia, where sometimes I think school is an interruption to their social life, school for these Indian children is so important. They want to be at school and can sit through the most boring lessons and simply say *more please*. They come clean, (personal cleanliness is part of the Hindu practices) and in their best clothes – the school uniform provided to them. They love their teachers, respect them and appreciate what the school is doing for them. Given their backgrounds, they are not always well behaved but easily lovable.





Across India, school retention rates are very low for Dalit students with only 38% reaching the end of Year 10. In the OM schools that rate is much higher but students still face huge problems like from about Year 6 the family demanding boys leave school and to find work and for girls to marry from a similar age. Nothing is more heartbreaking then to lose a capable Year 7 student to marriage. But despite these heartbreaks there are many successes.

### Our work

In our first visit I wrote a report for OM about the learning issues in the school and they responded by asking me to evaluate some other schools. From this I developed a set of descriptive standards for the schools to work towards in 12 areas of schooling and an evaluation process against these standards.



My visits over the last few years have been focussed on the evaluation of all the schools that have reached Year 7, providing a report that can be used to draw up a management plan for improved learning. The key areas of concern are what it means to be an English medium school and how the teachers can break out of teaching for rote learning. In addition, I have provided professional development for principals and school managers.

My wife Elizabeth has developed two projects:

1. The provision of science equipment and chemicals and some other resources to schools as they reach Year 7 and
2. The training of science teachers in using these materials.

Both of us have trained teachers as presenters and evaluators to ensure that this work will continue should we not be able to go to India.

So there it is. For four months a year in two visits we find





ourselves in retirement, working in India, using our skills and doing what we have been trained to do. Our work is in slums and rural villages (that is where the Dalits are to be found) to support the education of some wonderful students who deserve every opportunity to succeed.

In the other months, Elizabeth continues to do some part time work at TAFE, we try to keep contact with our friends and spend as much time as possible with grandchildren but we have little desire to do more travel as we continue to do some very hard travel to visit schools all over India.



All our work is self funded by courtesy of my superannuation. It is not work that would suit everyone or that everyone would want to do, but for us it is rewarding, fulfilling and a privilege to sit in the classrooms of Indian teachers and encourage, support and enhance their work to improve

the quality of education for some of the loveliest students you could ever meet.

**John Gore**

### ***Friends of Stewart House***

**Thursday 28th April 'The Challenge of Leadership' Professor Ed Davis, Ryde/Eastwood Leagues Club**

10.30 for 11am. Cost \$10. Lunch own expense.

**Contact:** Dianne Hill 9665 7202 by Monday April 25.

**Wednesday 11th May, Lunch at International College of Management, Manly. Cost \$40**

**Contact:** Barbara Kenny 9986 1718 by Wed May 4.

**Friday 13th May, Stewart House Public Meeting, 1.30pm, house inspection from 12.30.**

**Contact:** Barbara Kenny 9986 1718 by Monday May 9.

**Wednesday 22nd June, Lunch at Doyle's Restaurant at Circular Quay. 12.15 for 12.30. Cost \$35**

**Contact:** Barbara Kenny 9986 1718 by Friday June 17.

For further information contact Pat Morgan,

phone 9948 2162

## Two Remarkable Aussies

This is the story of two remarkable Aussies. The first rejoices in the name of 'atrac robustus', better known, and dreaded, as the Sydney funnel-web spider.

The second, who became its nemesis, is the late Dr Struan Sutherland (1936-2002).

Those of us who've lived most of our lives in or around Sydney are likely to know at least something about "atrac robustus", generally acknowledged by scientists to be the most venomous spider in the world.

Regrettably, we are far less likely to know much, if anything, about Dr Sutherland, a research scientist and immunologist who devoted much of his life to the discovery of an anti-venom for the common, and justifiably feared spider.

Against all odds, he eventually did so, and, along the way, also developed the pressure bandage, which replaced the potentially gangrene-causing tourniquet, as well as anti-venoms for such other deadly Aussies as the box jellyfish, the paralysis tick, several venomous snakes, the stonefish and the red-back spider.

More later about this remarkable man, but let's first look at the funnel-web spider itself.

Although the Sydney funnel-web is the best known and, rightly, the most feared, there are varieties of funnel-web spiders in every state except Western Australia.

There is a Blue Mountains funnel-web, a northern NSW/southern Queensland tree-dwelling funnel-web, and other species in southern NSW, the ACT and in north-eastern Victoria. There is even a species of funnel-web found in Tasmania.

None of these, however, has the uniquely deadly venom of the Sydney funnel-web, and even the word "Sydney" should be considered with flexibility. A Sydney funnel-web may well be encountered in Newcastle, Wollongong or the Blue Mountains!

The male Sydney funnel-web, (the most likely to be encountered) is almost certainly the most lethal and aggressive spider in the world.

The venom of the male funnel-web is also bafflingly complex, which caused Dr Sutherland and his colleagues years of frustration.

While the female funnel-web rarely leaves her nest burrow, the males wander quite far afield in search of prey, and of a mate. Their peak activity period is January – March, during which they are very aggressive, entering houses, garages, cars etc.

Their wanderings are by no means restricted to the above months, however. While I was recently (September '08) in hospital, my terrified wife encountered a male funnel-web making a determined effort to climb our carpeted stairs to the upstairs bedrooms and, in the process, aggressively posturing in front of our small, inquisitive (and dopey) dog.



By the way, a biochemical fluke in the male funnel-web's venom makes its bite uniquely deadly to primates, and 50 times less powerful to non-primates, such as dogs, cats, mice, rabbits etc. (We'll return to this phenomenon later).

Sydney funnel-webs build a silken funnel or tube at the entrance to their burrow, which may be in the ground, in leaf litter, under rocks etc. The burrow may be half a metre deep.

As children, in Concord West, we used to delight in poking a long grass stem down a funnel-web hole, luring the occupant to the surface and then pouring boiling water on it. For some reason, our parents were not amused.

A happy (?) coincidence is the fact that Sydney's northern suburbs, e.g. Thornleigh, where I live, is ideal funnel-web territory, as they appear to love the great shelves of Hawkesbury sandstone with which the area abounds.

They also appear to love swimming pools. Of the 30 or more funnel-webs which I've caught in and around my home, about half were happily submerged in our (erstwhile) swimming pool, looking lifeless, but far from it, being able to remain under water for several hours, within an air bubble.

I hasten to add that, with only one exception, all the funnel-webs I've captured were taken, alive and safe within a sealed jar, initially to Macquarie University and, more recently, the Australian Reptile Park near Gosford, where they are "milked" for the production of anti-venom.

I do not recommend trying to collect these deadly spiders, unless you know what you are doing and take proper precautions. The aggressive, rearing posture of (especially male) funnel-webs is not a bluff.

While they cannot jump, (this is an urban myth), given half a chance they will rear up and strike rapidly and repeatedly at a human or animal, far too large to be a prey item.

Their large, downward stabbing fangs can penetrate the skull of a lizard, a rodent or small bird, and have been known to pierce a human fingernail or shoe.

Belatedly, we'd better describe *atrax robustus*, for the uninitiated.

They are medium to large spiders, with a body length ranging from 1cm to 5cm. They are dark in colour (from black to brown), with their back (carapace) usually glossy, resembling patent leather. Their fangs are large and noticeable, as are two spinnerets emerging at their rear end. (They remind many people of the notorious "tarantula", although, in reality, the funnel-web is far more lethal).

Funnel-webs are often confused with the Sydney trap-door spider, which often, but not always, builds a silken lid or "door" over its burrow. This quite large spider is usually brownish, with a "furry" appearance, whereas the funnel-web is usually "shiny".

While we now believe that the trap-door spider (*dyarcyops fuscipes*) is nowhere near as venomous as the funnel-web, the safest rule is to treat all spiders, especially ground-dwelling spiders, with respect. There are, incidentally, some 2000 species of spiders in Australia.

As I indicated earlier, the venom of the male and female funnel-web is so lethal it can kill insects, lizards, rodents and birds, but no-one has discovered why the male's venom, alone, contains an additional ingredient, called atraxotoxin, which, in primates, acts as a powerful neurotoxin, which has a drastic impact on muscle control, breathing, blood pressure and blood circulation. Symptoms include sweating, salivation, shaking and dangerous rises in blood pressure and pulse rate. Death can follow in as little as 15 minutes.

This strange ingredient is obviously not needed for the spider to subdue its normal prey. If it were, the female's venom would also contain it ... and it does not!

There are no primates in the Australian bush except man himself, and since we are not edible prey for the funnel-web, the reason for the male's unique venom remains a mystery.

The final irony, while it used to be thought that this made the female funnel-web much less dangerous to humans, scientists are now not so sure.

**Graham Sims**

*In part two of this article, in the next issue of the ARISSEA Newsletter, Graham will introduce Dr Struan Sutherland, whose single-minded determination led to his discovery of an anti-venom to the funnel-web's lethal toxin.*

**Editor**

#### *Last December Lunch*



Terry Burke and John Cook

### *Last December Lunch*



Pat Morgan and Joan Healy

### *Members say*

Wagga Wagga

#### *Indentured or have you lost your teeth?*

The Parkins and the Sinclairs felt like a trip to Tasmania. We had all been there in days gone by but thought a trip to replicate our recent trips to New Zealand (oh dear we had really enjoyed our early morning cuppas in the tea and gift shop attached to the Christchurch Cathedral that is now devastated) and then to Broken Hill.

Anne did all the planning and booking because after our New Zealand experience we realised that the words 'wheelchair accessible' mean such different things to different people. She studied the 'Spirit of Tasmania' and she examined every chosen hotel. We decided that Launceston, Coles Bay, Hobart, Strahan and Cradle Mountain would be the circuit over about a fortnight.

Details attended to but then there were the details within details: find the Melbourne dock; how early is early for a ferry; where do you park cars to kill time? All those nasty nothings of life that can be disastrous.

Smooth seas; Shirley had studied the weather, the swells, the high and the lows and downed her Kwells regardless. A long dinner in the ferry dining room and many laughs set the tone and we retired looking forward to the nights to come.



Early morning ... the 5.30 am wake up call stretches many but me ... my day is well underway most times by then; but then there is no accounting for eccentricity I suppose. All packed and ready to be called to the cars on an ex-apple isle.

Wayne invited me to look under Anne's bed! I dived under as you do: orange life jacket, not needed; so what am I looking for? And there gaping at me was someone's forgotten dentures. Anne certainly appeared to have all of hers and Wayne even looked normal.



Sunset from the Cabin at Freycinet

Unkindly and for the next fortnight those teeth, missed by their mouth and by the cleaner, were the basis of many a discussion. How were they left? And left in a special cabin for those with a disability. Is it funny or is it so, so sad? The image remains and we laughed about getting the same cabin on return. I still giggle.

We idled to Launceston on the byways. No hurry and Wayne's double shot coffee was a mandatory focus. Launceston was delightful and I think it is my favourite Tasmanian city. I feel hemmed in while in Hobart somehow by their one-way chaos. Gridlock is easy there I think.

Freycinet was superb; adjacent cabins ... some walks and laughs ... some seafood that was not really a patch on that I had consumed before in Hobart.

On to Hobart and a couple of apartments on Constitution Dock. We had a balcony overlooking the dock and Anne and Wayne had a traffic lights' shadows through the curtain. This was a standard joke because when in Istanbul, Shirley and I had air-conditioning *and* a fan and Wayne had a window; the three of us had the very early shattering calls-to-prayer, however.

Mt Wellington provided a superb vista after a twisting climb and it was wonderful to get Anne up there. We took the opportunity of the clear morning and those who know will smile because that opportunity in Hobart can come and go in moments.

I was panicking (not unusual) because petrol was meagre in the tank and garages were so difficult to find; Murphy would note that the garages were always on the other side! That worked out as it does, and then we were on our way to Strahan. A wonderful but exhausting drive; a stop deep in the forest for ten minutes for road works; lunch at idyllic Lake St Clair, the contrast, Queenstown, and then to Strahan.





Cradle Mountain

It isn't Strahan's fault but it was there that we were glitch-ridden. The drive was too long and arduous for just an overnight stay; the motelier had not listened to Anne regarding the need for an accessible room; and our car battery decided it was 'all too much' and a replacement was required. All hiccoughs rather than dramas. And on to Cradle Mountain.

Not that far, yet the roads were a bit hectic and exacerbated by a young fellow towing a boat but wanting to be in front of everyone else in awkward conditions. His nose was more out than in and that made life unpleasant; he was a drip.



Life at Cradle Mountain, again in adjacent cabins, was delightful. Some wonderful walks and a very clear view of Cradle Mountain at Dove Lake and then suddenly understanding our luck by overhearing one chap remark that it was his third visit and it was the first time he had seen the mountain (because of cloud I presume although other constructions are possible!).

'Back to Devonport via Penguin of course; repeat the ferry backwards *sans* teeth but not *sans* anything else ... and we wake to Wayne's birthday.

A day in Melbourne, a dinner with some Parkins' family, friends and associates then a trip home to Wagga. I was thrilled at the dinner to meet Wayne's friend Chris, from Glasgow, because I wanted to know what he knew of Renton (20-30 km west of Glasgow), the birthplace

of some of my forebears.

Then age came to the fore; we suffered ferry-lag for 3-4 days and we hadn't even left the time zone. We had a wonderful time and shared many laughs. The organisation was a

tribute to Anne and Shirley. Wayne and I packed our own bags, but with advice of course. What would we know?

Ian Sinclair

*Members say*

**FROM THE EQUATOR TO THE ANTARCTIC CIRCLE – AN 8 WEEK ADVENTURE**

If someone had said to us how would you like to have a holiday where you will suffer heat waves and blinding rain in the Amazon, where you will get your camera stolen in a church on Boxing Day and your ship will hit an uncharted rock then we might stop and reconsider it. Well fortunately we are never given those options because few of us see the future but that was actually some of the mishaps that occurred to us on our recent 8 week holiday to South America.

Don't get me wrong it was a fantastic trip and we would certainly do it all again but holidays never turn out the way you intended them to be. After all we missed the Australian floods, that terrible week of unrelenting heat, the cyclone and the horrific bushfires in WA, didn't we. As one of our colleagues recently said in this newsletter, South America is certainly the place to go.



Ten days before last Christmas, Marilyn and I flew to Santiago and then on to Quito on the Equator before travelling on to the Galapagos Islands. Anyone who has gone to the Galapagos will tell you about the amazing tame wildlife and the variety of species as you move from one island to another.



You can walk right up to a nesting blue footed booby as she sits on her egg. You can step over sea lions and iguanas that refuse to move and you can swim in warm and cold currents of the Humboldt while you observe the fascinating marine life.

Ecuador is still learning to deal with the tourist market but it was interesting to see the scientific experiments conducted at Mitad del Mundo, the tourist visiting centre on the Equator, where you can balance an egg on its end and then watch it fall as you move it either side of the 'line'.

There were a few snippets of misinformation given as well unfortunately: water does not necessarily go straight down the plughole at the Equator nor does it have to go clockwise or anti clockwise in each of the hemispheres but the Coriolis Effect relating to the wind directions and air movements are definitely true.



One of the challenges of travelling in the high Andes is one's ability to handle the altitude. Once you reach 4 000 metres, and even before that, there is less oxygen. While we suffered no sickness itself we found we were taking a lot more deep breaths and when we scaled those Inca steps (little people who made huge steps) we were puffing in no time at all and had to rest and catch our breaths at every tenth step.

I found this an advantage however when I returned home; climbing the hill in our home street was a breeze and I had never felt so fit. No doubt this will change very soon.

One of the interesting traditions in Ecuador is to regard New Year's Eve as the end of the bad old year and to signify its passing the business houses makes hundreds of dummies to sell to the locals. At midnight in the city of Cuenca they burnt the dummies in the street signifying the grateful and welcome end of the old year. Usually the dummy symbolises the destruction of not only the old year but an assassination of someone the fire bug detests.

Needless to say there are many fires in the streets on that night, some causing damage to property and persons. We had a party with our group in our own hotel and had a dummy “guest” at our table. At midnight the hotel staff carried “him” to the street and set him ablaze.

One interesting fact was something we learned about panama hats. They may be sold in Panama but they are in fact made in Ecuador. The factory was a sight to behold and a strong local alcoholic drink tasting like furniture polish made the visit even more worthwhile.

Not all South American countries have the same devotion to Catholicism as the Ecuadorians. By the time you get to Bolivia, where the state recently refused to fund the Catholic Church any more, there are less statues of the Virgin and the churches have smaller congregations.

Brazil and Argentina are less overtly religious in spite of the Christ, the Redeemer statue overlooking Rio. But it is the diversity of South America that makes a visit so enthralling—from the indigenous populations on the western side of the continent (Peru, Chile and Ecuador) to the more European oriented cultures of Brazil and Argentina in the east.

Variations occur in foods, the different influences of past Portuguese and Spanish settlements, the scenic wonders of the high Andes to the tropical jungles and the cooler climates of Patagonia and the far south.

We had fun fishing for piranhas in the Amazon, visiting tribal villages, climbing interminable Inca steps in and around Machu Picchu, walking the streets of Ushuaia (known as Fin del Mundo or the End of the World because there is no permanent settlement further south on the planet), taking in the beaches of Rio, eating the best steaks in the world in Buenos Aires and seeing how to do the tango in this same great city.

NSW can learn a lot from Buenos Aires. Over a century ago the city fathers decided to redevelop the centre of the city and construct a 14 lane highway through the middle of it. It may take some time for a pedestrian to cross it but the traffic flow is fantastic!

A similar innovation occurs in Rio where roads on Sundays become a pedestrian mall. Cars are given two of the 6 beachside roads while the remainder is reserved for pedestrians. Fortunately it works.

And that stolen camera incident? Oh yes, we decided to go into the cathedral of a small town in Ecuador on Boxing Day.

The place was crammed with worshipers as the priest gave his sermon through a booming sound system. As we were leaving a group of youths passed us in the side aisle, one bumping me violently off balance while another took my camera from my pocket.

They were very clever and had done this many times before I suspect but the real tragedy was losing all my 500 photos of the Galapagos and Quito. The disappointment was somewhat alleviated by a kind fellow traveler who gave me a copy of his photos.



I managed to buy a replacement camera in the next town but the lesson here was no matter how many precautions you take these guys know their craft well and can find ways to foil even the most careful tourist.

Having breathed the air of the tropics and gasped the atmosphere of the mountains we then ventured to the frozen south. Leaving Ushuaia on the MV Polar Star, a refitted Swedish naval ice breaker, we crossed the Drake Passage and sailed along the Antarctic Peninsula, that string of gleaming white land that juts northward towards South America.

The Drake Passage off Cape Horn has of course one of the worst and roughest seas in the world but we were lucky, for on both occasions; the waters were calm and with our sea sick patches behind our ears we were extremely efficient at conserving the contents of our stomachs for the whole trip except for one minor incident involving myself.

The interesting thing I learned from this voyage was how ignorant we are of the Polar explorers from a South American perspective. We learned so much at school about Scott, Shackleton, Amundsen and Australians like Hurley and Mawson but what about Weddell, Clark and Fiennes? Stories of these and others are listed in the museum in Ushuaia. The museum is an old gaol, each former cell now a display room depicting some aspect of Patagonian history.

Interestingly Ushuaia, with a current population of about 40 000, began in the same way as Sydney, as a penal colony. It seems the Argentineans (the Spanish?) had a similar bureaucratic system to the British in dealing with their political and other offenders by banishing them to the end of the then known world. What better place than the “End of the World” to dispose of trouble makers?

Ironically this so called end of the world has the most beautiful landscape right on its doorstep. Antarctica in the summer at least is the most beautiful place we have ever visited. Some of the people we met on our trip were ticking off all the continents they had visited and this was the last one they had to do. Its abundant wildlife of penguins, seals, whales and birds is something we will never forget.

Each day we would be loaded into our rubber zodiac and taken ashore to see a new wonderland. Along with the animal life we visited a Polish research station and another, a Ukrainian that collected bras and offered us a vodka for \$2. Even the British were maintaining their presence there repairing one of their old research stations.

And how cold was it? I think minus one was the lowest we experienced and one day it climbed to 19C which is a bit of a worry considering global warming. However one day with a strong wind and snow storm the chill effect would have had to be considered.



The food on the Polar Star was superb and each day we were offered lectures on the local geography, geology and animal life by academics who had come to Antarctica for their paid holidays. These same experts planned the itineraries and took us ashore most days to see the sites.





But all good things come to an end.

On the eighth day as we were eating breakfast, a deafening grinding sound was heard and the ship listed to starboard. Jokingly we referred to the Titanic and how we might sink but the jocular conversation soon turned to alarm when the bells began to ring. Grabbing our life vests we headed to the top deck.

We were soon assured we were not going to die and only the outer hull had been torn open. We had to pump out water and float off the offending rock that had not been listed on the charts. Normally the captain would anchor some 50 metres from this spot but on this occasion an iceberg stood in the ship's way.

After a day of indecision we were told we would have to transfer to one of 3 other ships that were touring in the area. Next day we boarded MV Ushuaia with 20 other passengers out of the original 71 we had travelled with on the Polar Star.

The trip back to Ushuaia was without incident except we now found ourselves in a dark and stuffy cabin well below the porthole line. In that time I forgot to renew my sea sickness patch and subsequently decided to suffer the dreaded mal de mer.



After 16 airport transfers, 8 weeks of constant stimulation, each day bringing a new surprise we finally boarded our QANTAS flight at Buenos Aries and returned home.

Ironically the flight took the same flight as our ship did when we sailed to Antarctica, then over the Pole and north to Tasmania and up to Sydney. South America at its southern end is much closer to us than we think but still 14 hours away nevertheless.

There was one small blessing in having our voyage to the southern continent cut short. The company has promised to give us half our money back for the Antarctic cruise. A generous gesture indeed but don't let our story discourage you.

This is the trip for everyone and as part of a guided tour you can overcome the language barrier and survive extremely well in a Spanish (or Portuguese in Brazil) type culture. Give it a thought, you won't be disappointed.

**Syd Smith**

***Members say***

New South Wales Education

The school inspector is visiting the year 4 class in one of the Cabramatta Public schools. He is introduced to the class by the teacher. She says to the class, "Let's show the inspector just how clever you are by allowing him to ask you a question".

The inspector reasons that normally class starts with religious instruction, so he will ask a biblical question. He asks: "Class, who broke down the walls of Jericho?"

For a full minute there is absolute silence. The children all just stare at him blankly. Eventually, little Mahommed raises his hand. The inspector excitedly points to him. Mahommed stands up and replies: "Sir, I do not know who broke down the walls of Jericho, but I can assure you it wasn't me".

Of course the inspector is shocked by the answer and looks at the teacher for an explanation. Realizing that he is perturbed, the teacher says: "Well, I've known Mahommed since the beginning of the year, and I believe that if he says that he didn't do it, then he didn't do it".

The inspector is even more shocked at this and storms down to the principal's office and tells him what happened, to which the principal replies: "I don't know the boy, but I socialize every now and then with his teacher, and I believe her. If she feels that the boy is innocent, then he must be innocent".

The inspector can't believe what he is hearing. He grabs the phone on the principal's desk and in a rage dials the Premier's telephone number and rattles the entire occurrence to her and asks her what she thinks of the education standard in the state.

The Premier sighs heavily and replies: "I don't know the boy, the teacher or the principal, but as the Premier and Minister for Reconstruction, I authorise you to get three quotes and have the wall fixed!!"

**Merv Blanch**



### *Last December Lunch*



Richmond and Jeannette Manyweathers

### *Members say*

Yesterday's S.M.H. included the death notice of Gwen Davies at the age of ninety-three. Gwen was the widow of Ron Davies, who was the first District Inspector to be appointed to the Moree District. The year was 1956. Housing was a scarce commodity in Moree and Ron and Gwen were allocated a diminutive Housing Commission house.

Ron later became Assistant Director of Metropolitan Central, I think. Gwen was a wonderful lady who lived a very active life and maintained an interest in gardening activities until a very advanced age.

David Maher

### *Address changes*

**(Changes shown in Bold)**

7/01/2011   YOUNG   A   (Alan-Leah)  
40 High St   Hallidays Point   2430  
(02) 6559 2569   [aleyoun@bigpond.com](mailto:aleyoun@bigpond.com)

Members are reminded that material is  
needed for the next Newsletter.  
Accompanying photos are most welcome,  
preferably as a JPG email attachments.  
Copy deadline: 13th June 2011.

Contributions should be directed to:

Brian Ford, Secretary,  
[genecom@bigpond.net.au](mailto:genecom@bigpond.net.au)  
OR

Peter Robinson,  
Newsletter Editor,  
3 Corunna Ave,  
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[peterrobinson7@gmail.com](mailto:peterrobinson7@gmail.com)

***From the Editor***

North Rocks

All members are entitled to receive their Newsletter in the most appropriate form for them. This traditionally means the photocopied version delivered by mail. This will continue in future unless you request, or have requested, an email version instead.

This edition of the ARISSEA Newsletter has been produced in 3 versions.

1. The traditional version is the usual 2 column magazine layout that is photocopied in B/W paper form for distribution by Australia Post.
2. The 2 column format is also available as a full colour email version for members who want to receive it by email and be able to print parts of the Newsletter.
3. The single column, screen formatted, full colour digital version that is designed to be distributed by email and read from a computer or video screen, although it can be printed in part if desired. This version is longer (in pages) than the other two because it has a different page layout, usually extra photos and late comments that the earlier versions can't include because of timing and page limitation.

As you received this version by email, you are currently on the email Newsletter list. If you would like to view a copy of version 2, the 2 column email version, please send an email requesting it, to me at: [peterrobinson7@gmail.com](mailto:peterrobinson7@gmail.com). It will not affect you continuing to receive this version, as version 2 is a free test version.

I would appreciate your comments and suggestions regarding the layout and the appropriateness of the email versions. Please send them to me at:  
[peterrobinson7@gmail.com](mailto:peterrobinson7@gmail.com).

**Peter Robinson**